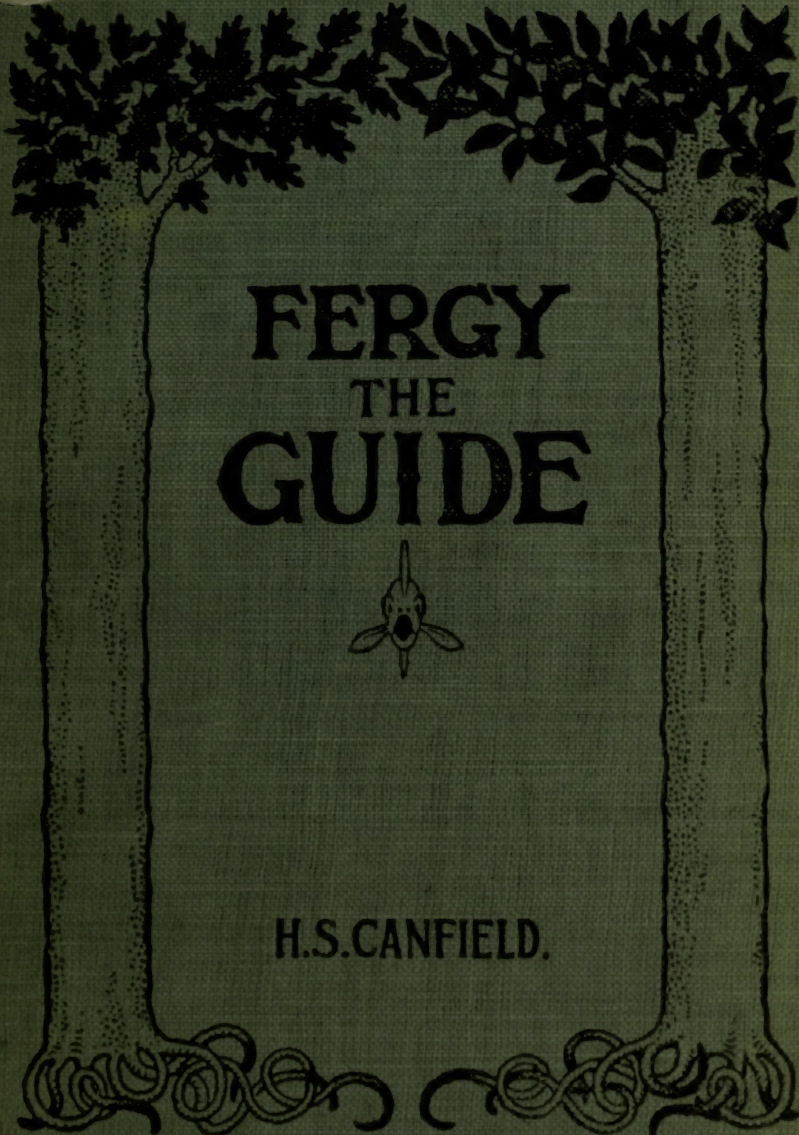


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FERGY THE GUIDE



H.S. CANFIELD.

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FERGY THE GUIDE

AND HIS MORAL AND INSTRUCTIVE LIES
ABOUT BEASTS, BIRDS, AND FISHES

BY
H. S. CANFIELD

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS
BY
ALBERT D. BLASHFIELD



NEW YORK
HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY
1904



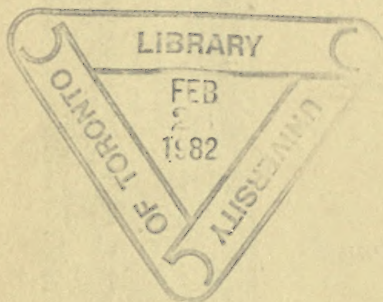
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INTRODUCING MR. HENRY
FERGUSON



FERGUSON the guide, called Fergy for short,—squat, muscular, and brown, with small dark eyes peering from under a drooping brim,—sat on the middle thwart of the boat. In the summer sun Round Lake lay placid. Not a ripple crinkled it. The great pines and hemlocks which grew to the water's edge were motionless in the noon heat. Over the wide and mirror-like expanse the quavering, wailing cry of a loon sounded. A blue heron stood gaunt upon a wooded point, waiting for his

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luncheon to swim by, and at one end of the lake a mother teal led her brown brood of seven by devious ways in and out among the rushes. While usually the water rippled, as if against a beach, upon the lips of the lily-pads, on this day not a murmur came from them. Under their shelter the huge black bass reposed nor might any form of lure, live frog or minnow, phantom minnow or spoon, fly or white salt pork, tempt them to come forth.

The other man in the boat listened while Fergy talked. He paid Fergy \$2 a day to haul him about into secret places where the fish are known to be, and to handle the craft as only a master can handle it when that shooting wolf of the western waters, the muskallonge, strikes the spoon and the battle for life begins. When pike, pickerel, bass, and "musky" refused to strike, it was worth the

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money to hear the woodsman in unmodulated voice drone on of the way in which they had bitten in the past and doubtless would bite again. His language was simple and direct, unadorned with the graces of rhetoric, unmarred by the crimpings of grammar, the unfettered, expressive tongue of the wilderness, the birch-bark shack and the logging-camp.

"Talkin' 'bout fishin'," said Fergy, the other man not having spoken for half an hour, "talkin' 'bout fishin' an' th' funny things a man sees sometimes when his eyes ain't shut, reminds me o' a time when I got tired loafin' 'roun' Boyd's Hotel and wanted to do a do on m' own reel. I go down to Long Lake an' dump m'se'f inter a piroog and I go across an' pike along out inter th' woods. I pike for 550 yards straight as a teal flies when it means business, and I run

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bang against a little lake I never seen before in my life. It laid there among the trees an' alder-bushes like a lookin'-glass, not more'n a acre, and I wanten to say as it were broke from end to end with ripples made by th' small-mouth bass.

"They was two million of 'em, or mebbe they was three million, an' it were pretty 'nough to make a man keep away f'om whiskey an' the gals forever an' ever amen. I dug m' hands into m' pockets an' I didn't have no more bait as would catch a starvin' minner in a wash-bowl. I thought hard f'r three an' a quarter minits an' then I out with th' tail of m' red flannel shirt and tore off a hunk big 'nough to wrap a penknife in. I didn' need that much, but I wanted fish and th' other guides had plenty o' shirts and we all bunked in the same cabin. Now, a little piece o' red flannel ain' the mos' eatful

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thing in th' worl', but, say, them fish was crazy f'r it. It hadn' touched the water when twenty-three of 'em made a dash f'r it an' one of 'em that weighed four an' a quarter pounds got it right in the left gill. Then begin the dadbingedest hurroosh whatever.

"Th' line were in the air mos' o' th' time goin' in ur comin' out, and many a time a fish would meet the flannel two an' a arf feet 'bove the water. I'd reef i. into him the second he struck; he'd be hooked by the time his tail touched the lake; and I jerked that old quadruple multiplying so fast that he'd come in standing on his flukes, with maybe his hind fin jus' tippin' the water now and agin. I never see such fish. Nobody never did.

"I ketched sixty-one red-eyed bass in sixty minits flat. Then my right arm was so tired

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I had to lift on the string with my lef' hand an' paddle home with that hand, too. I ain' certain but what they was sixty-two, but Antoine Garashay come down to the boat t' meet me at th' hotel landin', and he was the worst fish-thief that ever made a track big enough f'r two fair-sized men. He were drowned las' year loggin' on the Flambeau, and I ain' much doubt that some meat was on his bones made by one of them red-eyes. That catch weighed 152 pounds 11 ounces, and they wa'n't a big mouth in the bunch."

Fergy has never read Dean Swift and is unaware of the great doctor's habit of reinforcing his yarns by the use of minutiae, measuring a wash-bowl of the Brobdingnagians by the dome of St. Paul's and so forth, but he has the genius for detail that marks the accomplished prevaricator and backs his statements with such wealth of little things

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that the listener is forced into mute acquiescence, if not into outspoken belief.

"The meanes' guide I ever bumped agin," he went on, "were Aleck Hume. He were a Scotchmun, with French blood in him and a dash of Leech Lake Indian. I don't know where you'd go to find a meaner cross than that. It was his grandmother on the mother's side that give him the Indian tinge, and he got the French from his father's grandmother. He smoked my tobacker an' broke my pipe an' tol' the guests at th' hotel that I wa'n't no good. One day on Pickerel Lake me and m' man was out of bait and Aleck an' his man was down the shore, 200 yards f'om us. Aleck had the bait-bucket half full o' frogs sittin' behind him, and his man was in the stern. I can outswim any fish that ever jumped a lily-pad to reach a June-bug when I try, and I



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said nothin' to my man. I jus' went over th' side without makin' a splash and slipped under the water. The distance were 195 yards and there were a big ruffle on f'om the wind. I got a good start about eight feet un'er and I come up just behind Aleck as true as a hair. Say, you couldn't 'a' heerd a ripple. I put m' hand over th' gunwale, lifted th' frog-bucket, went un'er again, and the nex' thing I saw I were on the far side o' m' own boat, holdin' up th' frogs for m' man to see. Say, I thought he'd roll off the seat.

"Comin' back were a little harder than goin'. I was afraid to take too deep a breath; Aleck might 'a' heerd me. In a little wile his man lost the frog on his hook. They said it was a weedless hook, but it got caught in the pads, jus' the same. They ain' no weedless hook sure enough, 'cept one I made, and I'm tryin' to get a patent on it.

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Well, the langwidge that went over that lake when that man arsked that guide for them frogs were jus' wonderful. Aleck swore they was behind him a minute afore. His man asked sarcastical w'at brand of licker he were drinkin'. Then Aleck he said he was as sober as any dude w'at ever come out o' Chicago, and his man said that Aleck were a liar. Then Aleck got sulky and turned the boat round and made for the portage back into Mason Lake and so on to th' hotel, an' next day the hotel man that give him his grub to hang around and guide for the guests fired him over two counties. A tree 110 feet high and 6 feet 2 inches thick fell on him las' winter up in Rube Smith's camp and mashed him flatter 'n a ladybug, but that don't gimme back my tobacker.

"They's a funny tree right back of us up on the hill here. You couldn't find it unless

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I took you to it, but it's a wonder. It stands 325 rods f'om where we are sittin', northwest by north. I run ag'inst it one day when I were out huntin' for wasps' nests. They ain't no bait f'r bass like young wasps some times o' the year. Th' tree is a silver birch, and it ain' more'n three inches through. I noticed it because about a foot and a half from the ground there were a blaze on it two inches square, like some feller had done it with a axe. I didn' see w'at a blaze were doin' there, an' so low down, because there weren't no trail anywhere near, and I went up to it to have a look at it. Maybe you won' believe me when I tell you that it had thirty-three porkypine quills stickin' in it, just like little arrers. I never see anything like that afore, and I hung 'round for a hour waitin' to see some more. I knowed th' porkys was up to somethin'. Bimeby I see

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two come out of the woods, waddle up to the tree and then waddle away from it about two yard. I measured the distance afterward, and it were six feet two inches.

"They looked at one another a minute an' seemed to be argyin' 'bout som'p'n. They was just plain black porkypines, and I see their quills was thinner than they oughter been. Finerly one o' 'em switches hisself 'round until he were broadside to th' tree, give hisself a little jerk and a quill went flyin' and stuck in th' tree, a arf inch 'bove th' blaze an' a quarter inch to th' left. The other one sorter snickered, took his posish and landed inside the blaze, a inch below the centre. They was shootin' at a mark—that's w'at they was doin'—but w'at they had bet on it I don' know, and ef I knew I would not tell, as the song says.

"The first one, w'ich were th' bigges',



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looked sorter mad an' tried 'nother shot. He got pretty close to th' centre, but th' yuther one beat him with a bullseye. They tried 'nother shot apiece, but the little one won again. He sorter danced about on two legs f'r a minute or two, and then th' big one gathered him. Say, you never see any leaves fly like them leaves flew. They was a cloud of 'em w'irling about, an' in th' centre o' th' cloud was the two porkies. Th' little one wasn't as strong as th' big one, but he were scienced f'r keeps. I never see a little feller fight like he did. Three times the big one got him down, and three times he broke away, and th' way they slung the quills inter each other was orful. You could 'a' heard 'em rattle a quarter-mile away.

"At las' th' little one give a half w'irl, jumped a foot high, passed over th' big one's back, lit six inches f'om him, half-turned an'

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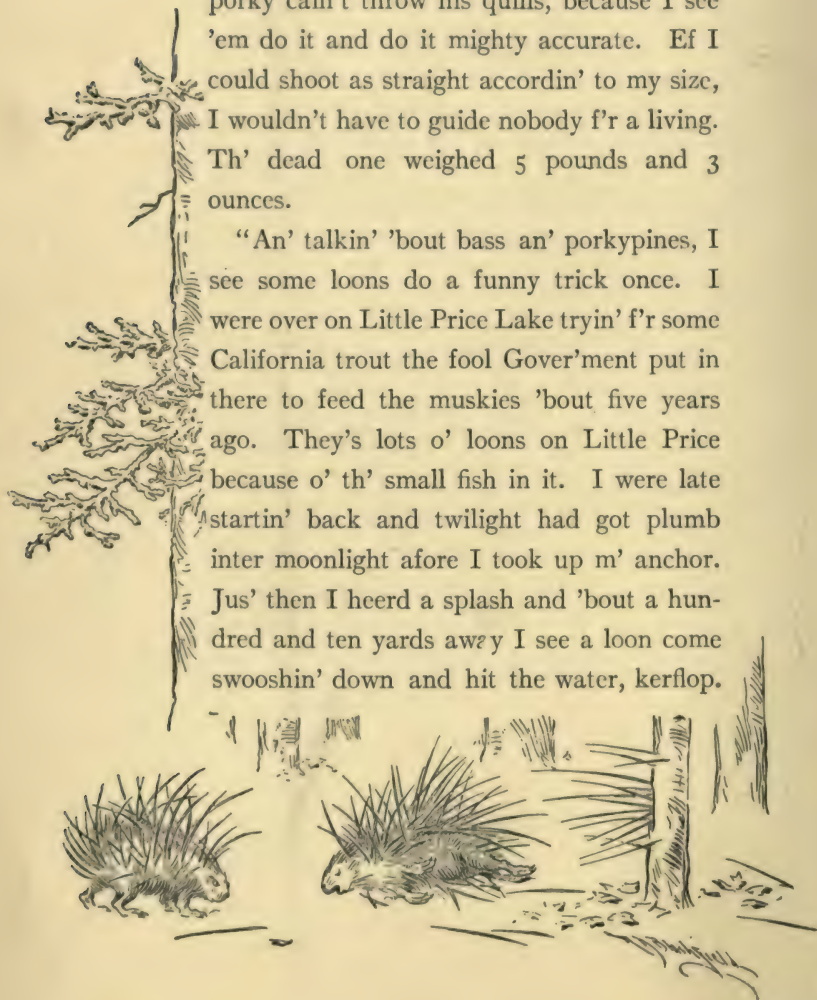
socked his teeth into his th'roat, w're no quills don' grow. Say, it was Katy bar th' door then. The big one let out a squeal like a young pig, and in arf a minute he keeled over on his side an' lay still. He didn' have life enough left in him to roll up inter a ball. He jus' died dead. The little one looked at him for aw'ile, then he went over and looked at th' mark they had been shooting at. He sorter sized up the posish o' th' quills stick-in' in it, and then he went away.

"I could 'a' killed him with a club, but I didn' have th' heart to do it. He sure were a game little fighter. When that fight ended them two porkies didn' have a dozen quills apiece on 'em that growed there. They had used up most o' their ammunition reefin' th' sharp p'int inter each other. Th' one w'at lived looked like he'd been in a wind that blowed his quills th' wrong ways, and th'

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other one w'at were dead jus' bristled with 'em. It ain' no use for folks to tell me a porky cain't throw his quills, because I see 'em do it and do it mighty accurate. Ef I could shoot as straight accordin' to my size, I wouldn't have to guide nobody f'r a living. Th' dead one weighed 5 pounds and 3 ounces.

"An' talkin' 'bout bass an' porkypines, I see some loons do a funny trick once. I were over on Little Price Lake tryin' f'r some California trout the fool Gover'ment put in there to feed the muskies 'bout five years ago. They's lots o' loons on Little Price because o' th' small fish in it. I were late startin' back and twilight had got plumb inter moonlight afore I took up m' anchor. Jus' then I heerd a splash and 'bout a hundred and ten yards aw'ay I see a loon come swooshin' down and hit the water, kerflop.



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He gave the signal-cry and another and another come in until I counted eighteen of 'em, swimmin' around in a circle.

"Then th' first one raised his head an' made a long cry an' th' others took it up in chorus. They swum slowly round an' round an' kept up their crying. It sounded like a sorter loon squallin'-match t' me at first, but 'pretty soon I began to pick out the diffrent notes. One feller'd squall 'way down deep and another 'way up high, and another sorter in th' middle, and th' others joined in first here and then there, and I see that it were a singin'-bee. That's w'at it were as sure as th' Lord made little apples. The first loon were teacher an' th' others was learnin' from him.

"Well, say, that noise got to be pretty agreeable in a little while. It had a sorter tune to it. Biemby th' tune got to be strong

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and plain. I never hear no tune like it and I been hittin' the fiddle f'r twenty year, but it were a tune all right. Then th' leader waved his head three times and one o' 'em come swimmin' slow out o' th' bunch an' took station five yards an' one foot away. He raised his head and his voice came out sorter sweet an' clear an' thin, like th' note you make on th' little string w'en the pitch is high and you draw the bow sof' an' even. Then th' big feller w'at had more w'ite on him than he oughter rolled in with a bass that were like th' wind boomin' in th' pine trees o' winter nights. Two o' 'em, with middlin' high voices, chimed in and th' others kep' as mum as mice and swum round and round. It were a loon quartette and th' music was beautiful.

"They sung an' sung an' th' old un in th' centre looked like he were goin' to faint. His

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bill would drop down until it rested in th' water and then he'd bring it back with a jerk, just like a man sittin' afore a fire, after a hard day with th' logs, an' noddin'. He'd roll f'om side to side and drop his bill and pull it back and wave his tail backerd an' forrerd quick ur slow, in time to th' music, an' every now an' then he'd rise almos' clear o' th' water an' stretch his wings like he was yawnin' and th' music was so good it made him lazy. Finally I noticed that when his bill went down each time it'd stay a little longer and seemed heavier when it come up.

"Then, toward th' last, all o' th' loons joined in th' leadin' o' th' quartette. I never heard a slower ur more sadsome tune. It almos' made me cry, because I begin to see what this was all about. Onct a feller tol' me 'bout th' song o' th' dyin' swan. I see a many swans die; I shot a many o' 'em my-

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self; but I never hear 'em sing none. Here, though, were a loon deathbed and this was th' loon hymn they sing when one of 'em's gotter go. Th' music got slower and more sadlike and th' ol' loon in th' middle finerly couldn't get his bill up at all. Then he give a las' kinder wiggle with his tail, sorter turned to one side and give up his sperret. Th' others sing another stave ur two, then they give it to me loud and gladsome f'r a bit, then they rise all at once and fly away, jus' as noiseless an' swift as spooks. I counted 'em agin when they left and they was just seventeen o' 'em.

“The dead un floated for a minute ur two, but w'en I started toward him to pick him up and see what were th' matter with him a big musky rose un'er him with his bullhead pointin' straight up. I see his jaws open and that were th' last o' Mr. Loon. That musky

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took him down like he weren't no bigger'n a half-growed teal. I wanter say I were mighty shivery, and goin' home I took the boat clear out o' th' water every snatch at th' oars."

The man in the stern of the boat said that he did not think the bass would bite at all that day, and Fergy said they never bit when the water was still and the sun was shining, unless a fellow could get a piece of young fawn for bait—a piece weighing three and a quarter ounces for preference. The man in the stern filled his pipe with plug cut, lit it, looked at the guide and asked him if he had heard any wheels going round when in bed the night before. Fergy said promptly that he had; that it was the windmill used for pumping water at the little woods hotel, and that the windmill was 5 feet 8 inches in diameter. Then they went slowly homeward.

HOW THE FISHING-BEAR WON THE POOL



IN camp near the Round Lake Spring Fergy was drying the silk lines which had been used in casting for bass that afternoon. Having hitched one end of a line to a projecting tree-fork, he walked to another fork and passed the silk over it, the reel singing as he went. Pacing backward and forward, loosening length after length, while the red firelight climbed high upon the trunks and dyed the feathery green frondage of the hemlocks and balsam pines, he was moved to speak of a fish-line which he had once owned.

“Walkin’ through th’ woods one day down by Lower Price,” he said, “I see a big black beetle hangin’ in th’ air. So fur’s I could see they weren’t nothin’ holdin’ him up, but there he were, buzzin’ an’ dronin’ like a prayer-meetin’ in a bark shack. I catch him in my hand, an’ I find that he’s hung by a spider web so thin an’ fine that it were almos’ inwis’bul. I joggled th’ web a little, an’ I see a black spider, measurin’ a inch an’ a quarter acrost the back, run out between th’ leaves o’ a maple, twenty feet over me, an’ then jump back. I pulled on th’ web, an’ it were s’prisin’ to see how strong it were. I bruk it an’ weighed that beetle on a fish-scale, an’ he pulled it down two ounces worth. I thinks to m’s’e’f as a fish-line made o’ that sort o’ web would be a great thing, mebbe, an’ I takes the thread back to camp with me for a cu’rosity.

“Nex’ day, goin’ that way, I find another web spun an’ a big skeeter-hawk hung on it. I bruk it agin an’ took it with me. Next mornin’ I went back an’ gotter piece an’ nex’ evenin’. Finerly I got to goin’ an’ breakin’ web six times a day. It was s’prisin’ how hard that spider worked. It seemed like he never got out o’ web-stuff. I’d break his snare, an’ in a’ hour it’d be back there jus’ as long an’ strong as ever. I was gettin’ out logs f’r a cabin near by, an’ in a month I had more’n ’nough web to fill a hat. Every thread o’ it were as roun’ as roun’ could be an’ strong ’nough to hang a good-sized minner.

“I put some of ’em inter th’ water, an’ I find that they was water-proof. They was gray in color an’ ’most as clear as glass, an’ w’en you put ’em on th’ lake top you couldn’t hardly see ’em a tall. That winter a gal I

knowed wove 'em inter a line f'r me. It were 180 feet 4 inches long an' not as big as th' smalles' silk line you ever see. Two hunderd and twenty-three strands went inter it, an', say, it'd hung a mule. They wasn't no wearin' that line out. You couldn' tangle it. It never got wet. It never overrun nur backlashed. It went off th' reel as slick as ile, an' castin' with it weren't no trouble. I could git out th' whole 180 feet 4 inches by a jerk o' th' wrist, an' it were like a song to hear the reel run.

"Catch fish? You could 'a' catched fish with it when they wasn't no fish there. Th' smartes' musky w'at ever swimmied could'n' see it in th' water; he couldn' tell it were hitched to th' bait, an' they used to take it all times o' the day an' th' night. I were a fool them days an' didn' know it was worth \$10 a foot ef it were worth a cent, an' I jus'

used it like any other line. One night Injun Pete come to camp with a pike w'at weighted thirty-four pound eleven ounces. I weren't there, an' he took my line an' staked his fish out in th' water with it, so's to keep him alive till mornin'. That night they let loose th' Manitowish dam in th' Flambeau an' 8,000,000 feet o' logs come down. They hit that line, stopped for a minit w'ile the water backed up behind 'em six inches high, an' then it broke. It made a report like th' crackin' o' a rifle an' woke me up. Nex' mornin' me an' Injun Pete had it up an' down f'r seventeen minits. They was blood an' ha'r an' th' groun' tore up. W'en th' camp boss and five axers drug me off'n him, I went down to th' river. They was only six inches o' th' line left and th' saplin' it were tied to were half started out o' th' groun'. It's somers near the mouth o' th'

Mississipp' by this time, fur that were five years ago, but it's good yet if somebody could find it, because it were water-proof."

The other man, lying upon his back with his feet propped against a giant fir and cigar-smoke curling over him, blinked lazily and said:

"Yes? That's fair, but not up to your usual work, Fergy. Too much fried fish is bad for your imagination." The guide was nettled. He ceased his to-and-fro walk and said:

"Mebbe. I notice that city folks knows lots we don' know, an' yet they ain' got horse sense. Ef I tell 'em th' plaines' things they don' believe 'em, an' ef s'm other guide tells 'em a lie they swaller it like it was Canuck w'isky, 150 proof. Things happen in these woods—lots of 'em—that a man has to have horse sense to un'erstan' an' believe.

I hadder feller like you onst. We was fishin' on th' North Fork an' not havin' any luck. He were a shore good caster, too, and he had a outfit would make your mouth water—must 'a' cost a thousand dollars. We threw into th' lily-pads, and 'long the aidges o' the pads, and behin' logs and 'bove th' riffles and never got a rise. Bimeby we give it up and let th' boat drif'. We drifted a hour ur two. He were smokin' an' I were thinkin'. Then we heerd a noise like bees hummin' an' a-plashin' in th' water like a little child was playin' in it. Now an' then they'd be a louder splash an' then quiet, 'cept for the hummin'.

“They was a bend jus' below us an' I stopped th' boat jus' 'bove th' bend an' we peeked roun' it. Now, you listen.

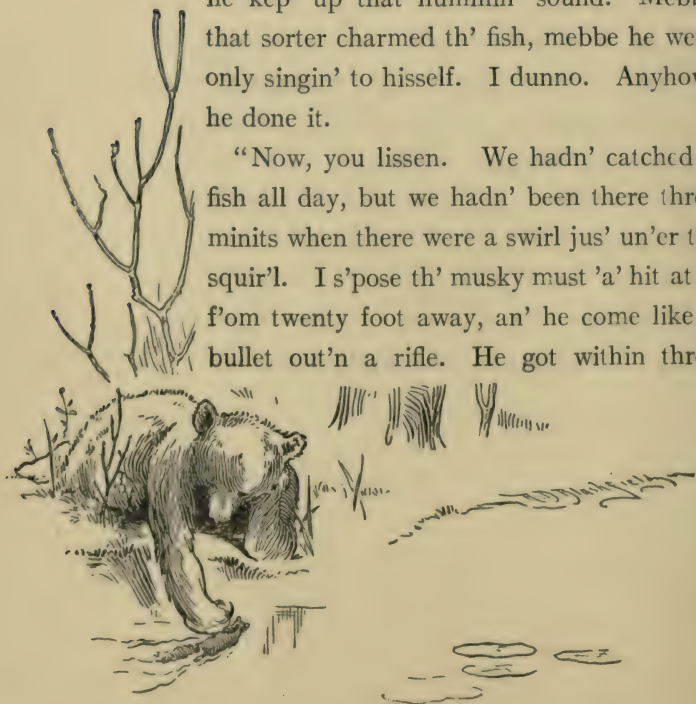
“Fifty feet below us on th' aidge o' th' bank, w'ere it dipped off sudden inter th'

water, were th' bigges' bear you, ur I, ur any man ever see. He were brown all over 'cept for a white patch that begin on his left side near to th' shoulder, run up his neck an' took in his left ear. That made him seem queer, to begin with, an' he had the wisest look o' any livin' thing w'at ever made a track. Two yards out run a thin line o' lilies an' between it and th' bank were clear water, and so deep that it were black. Th' city feller jus' sit there with his eyes bulged out and never moved, and I never moved.

"Now, fishin'-bears is common enough. They all fish w'en they git a chanst. They like the meat better'n a cat likes it. All they know, though, is to sneak along th' bank and slap out little fish with they paws, jus' like a coon fishes. This big un, howsomever, were diff runt. He were not only fishin', but he were fishin' fur muskies, and he were not

only fishin' fur muskies, but he were usin' bait. He'd caught a squir'l—a red squir'l—and they ain' no better musky bait. He'd hooked one o' his right claws jus' back o' the squir'l's head and he were draggin' it slow along the top o' the water, backerds an' forrerds, backerds and forrerds, so's th' tail'd float out behin' th' body. He were skitterin' that squir'l jus' like a good fisher-mun skitters f'r pick'rul. An' all th' time he kep' up that hummin' sound. Mebbe that sorter charmed th' fish, mebbe he were only singin' to hisself. I dunno. Anyhow, he done it.

“Now, you lissen. We hadn' caught a fish all day, but we hadn' been there three minits when there were a swirl jus' un'er th' squir'l. I s'pose th' musky must 'a' hit at it f'om twenty foot away, an' he come like a bullet out'n a rifle. He got within three



inches of it, though, an' he never got no closer. With his right paw th' bear snatched the squir'l back so fas' you couldn' see th' move; with his lef' paw he swiped down inter the water jus' as fas', and the next secon' they were a ten-poun' fish floppin' 'mong th' leaves on th' bank. One more swipe o' the paw an' th' fish were a deader. Then Mr. Bear went back to his work.

"Well, we sit there and we see him yank out 'nuther un in less'n five minits. This un wouldn' 'a' weighed more'n three poun'. Th' bear hefted it in both paws an' stopped sing-in'. Then he tossed it back inter th' water, picked up his squir'l and went to hummin' some more. We see him do that trick ten times in ten minits almos'. It were plain as he weren't goin' to keep no fish as weren't good uns. They was a rifle in the boat and

I reached f'r it, but th' city feller caught my han'.

“ ‘Not on your life,’ sezee. ‘That bear’s a sportsman,’ sezee. ‘He’s puttin’ back the little fellers to give ’em a chanst to grow,’ he says. ‘You row back up th’ river, quiet,’ he says. ‘I wisht they was more fishers like him in the world. I’m hirin’ this boat,’ sezee.

“We went back up th’ river arf a mile an’ then drifted down agin, the city feller singin’ a song as loud’s he could, so’s to give th’ gray-marked bear a chanst to git away, and, o’ cose, when we come roun’ th’ bend he weren’t there. He’d took his three big fish with him, too, but that was natchrul, as he had plenty o’ time.

“That night at the hotel the men guests made a pool. It were th’ city feller proposed it. The man w’at caught th’ bigges’

musky next day were to have his board free f'r ten days, were to have th' head o' the table, were to be waited on by the pretties' gal in th' dinin'-room, were to have his wagon-hire inter Fifiel' free an' were to have his Wisconsin Central ticket free as fur south as Milwaukee. They all went in. This feller had been there three days and hadn' catched nothin' though I guided f'r him mighty hard, and they give him the laugh.

"Nex' mornin' we fished th' river, threshin' over ev'ry foot o' it. We git lots o' red-eyed bass, but not a musky. Long 'bout th' same time o' day we drifted down and when we got close to th' bend we hear th' splashin' an' hummin'. We got inter hidin', jus' like we hided before.

"Th' bear were hard at it. He must 'a' had a big fam'ly to fend f'r, he were so

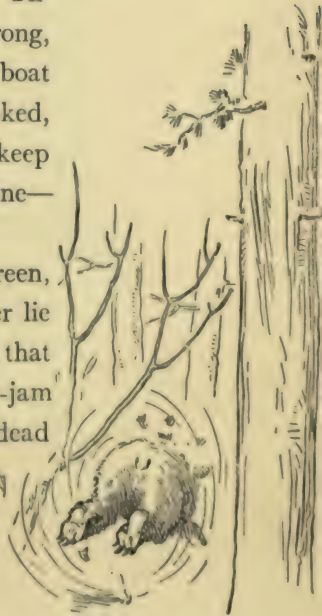


busy. He had a pile o' fish a foot high on th' bank, but they was all eight-pounders. He had th' same squir'l, an' we sit there an' let him do th' work. I never see a more artful skitterer. You'd a swore th' squir'l had jus' fell in and were tryin' to swim ashore an' couldn'. Fus' thing you know, there were a dash an' a mighty swirl an' th' back of a fish that looked to be a yard acrost showed under the place where the bait had been. The bear socked in his arm to the elbow and give such a heave that I thought his bones would 'a' cracked. Then he fell over on his back, with his short fat legs stickin' up in th' air, and on th' fur side o' him were a musky—a old-man musky—w'at beat anything as ever come out of the Flambeau. Immejitley I snatched th' boat aroun' the bend an' th' city feller let out a whoop you could 'a' heard four mile. Th' bear

w'eeled an' started to th' woods, but before he left he swiped th' big fish.

"Then I grabbed the rifle and let him have it. I was mos' crazy 'bout losin' that fish. Th' bullet jus' clipped him through th' skin on his back behind the shoulders. I seen th' fur fly. He dropped th' musky and th' nex' secon' he hit th' brush like a thousand mad steers, and were gone. Th' fish weighed 39 pounds 13 ounces strong, and th' city feller nearly fell out'n the boat laughin' and chucklin'. He liked 'a' choked, too. He give me a five-dollar bill to keep m' mouth shut—w'ich he needn't 'a' done—an' we went back to th' hotel.

"Say, them other city fellers turned green, and it were a treat t' hear m' city feller lie 'bout how he'd caught him. He fought that fish over th' rapids an' down inter a log-jam an' out at th' lower side o' it an' roun' a dead



hemlock stump an' through three acres o' lily-pads an' so on over three miles o' Flambeau water, an' I swear I could see the drops flyin' an' feel the boat jump un'er me an' hear th' reel snarlin' an' watch th' steel rod bendin' double an' lissen t' th' man pantin' w'at held it. That city feller were jus' as big a artist in his way as th' bear, but I always did hate a liar, and after he finished it took th' feel o' that bill in m' pocket to send me down to th' guide-house and make me go to sleep without sayin' nothin'.

"Now, you'd orter see m' city feller at that hotel. He stayed a week longer an' they weren't nothing good 'nough f'r him. A black-eyed gal f'om Ashlan' waited on him. He bossed th' talk. He had dishes w'at no other guest didn' have. He said free cigars was in the pool, too, an' made it stick, an' smoked up pretty near everything in th' glass

case by th' hotel counter. W'en he got ready to go th' other city fellers hitched up th' team f'r him an' one o' 'em druv it sixteen mile inter Fifiel' f'r him an' bought his ticket f'r him, an' w'en he got back they all lighted in an' cussed him up hill and down th' holler f'r a hawg, and sayed they'd kill him ef he ever come back. But he never come back.

"In three days, howsomever, he writ 'em a letter, d'rected to the city feller what'd held th' pool money. In the letter—I heerd it read aloud—he tol' 'em exactly how th' thing happened; said he couldn' let go th' chanst t' git the laugh on 'em and they was all to take dinner with him an' go to th' theayter with him w'en they come to Chicago. I were 'bout to speak up and tell 'em it was all true. I was 'bout to tell 'em, too, that it were a stuffed squir'l the bear had stole

f'om some Injun lodge—I had th' squir'l to prove it—w'en I see they faces. One of 'em says: 'He's a wonder.' Another one says: 'He's a genius.' Another one says: 'He'd oughter have free board and free lick'r f'r a year.' Another one says: 'Wouldn't that freeze your feet?' Another one says: 'He's all that, and he's th' mos' movin', pow'ful liar that ever broke a rod tip. He's got us all faded to a pale gray,' sezee."

Fergy hung the green mosquito-bar to the ridge-pole of the tent, rolled himself in his blanket, with his feet to the fire, and remarked drowsily:

"I never see th' bear no more, but I wisht I could make that hummin' noise. That must 'a' been the cunjer w'at caught them muskies."

THE OLD MUSKALLONGE OF THE BEND



YOU cain't tell nothin' 'bout them fish," said Fergy the guide, as he made a fisherman's bend around a weedless hook to take the place of a No. 8 Skinner that had been broken in the lily-pads and now dangled from one of the stems far out in the lake. "Mos' times a musky's got more sense as a man, an' that ain't sayin' that some o' th' men w'at comes here from big towns is smart. I have knowed a musky in th' Flambeau River to get mad at th' red on th' under side o' a No. 9 spoon an' chaw it up like it was terbacker. I have knowed 'em

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to come up within six inches o' it as it w'irled through the water, look at it jus' like a terrier looks at a rat an' then hit it, kerblip! Say, I seen men in th' lumber-camps w'at weighed 195 pounds apiece able to hit a blow that would shake a hemlock from root to top, but they couldn't hit like that musky. The spoon'd fly twenty feet straight up in th' air and mebbe goin' hard 'nough to pop itself off th' end o' th' line unless th' reel run slick.

"Jus' below th' six-mile rapids one day a fish come up and grabbed a copper-tipped oar I had in m' right hand. Say, that oar weighed mos' five pounds an' I hung to it, but he took it like it b'longed to him an' went off up stream with it, dragging it behind him like th' tail o' a comic. Four times I've knowed 'em to take tin cups out'n m' hands w'en I was drinkin', an' every time they was sugar an' alcohol in the bottom o' the cup.

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That makes me believe that all w'at keeps a musky sober is that he cain't git th' licker.

"One time, up in Abe Munson's camp close to th' head o' th' Flambeau, we caught one in th' shallers and kep' him in a tank set inter th' river. It had holes bored in th' side of it so's th' water would change. Swede Pete went down there one day. He were jus' back from Fifiel' an' red p'ison were comin' f'om every pore o' him. He had arf a bottle lef' an' he poured it inter th' musky's jaws w'en he comes to the top, like he allers did when they was somebody 'round.

"Say, that fish didn't weigh but eight pound four ounces, but you'd thought he weighed a ton five minutes afterward. The stuff didn' make him laugh, nur frolic, nur sing, nur weepy, nur sleepy. It jus' made him ugly and w'at he wanted was fight. Swede Pete, bein' drunk, stuck his hand

40 The Old Muskallonge of the Bend

inter th' water w'at was lashed inter soap-suds and los' a finger right away. Then the musky took to weavin' 'bout th' tank an' every now an' then he'd stop an' bite a chunk out'n the wood as big as a buckwheat cake. Pete had went away, but by th' time he come back with a club 'most one side o' th' tank were eat away an' in another minute the fish would 'a' been gone.

"'Ay tank,' Pete said, 'that yo' one dam timber-t'ief. Dam!'

"The musky didn' say nothin', but he stuck his flat head six inches out'n the water an' grinned. Say, that underlip o' his stuck out like a sore thumb an' every tooth in his head were shinin'. He give a slow imperdent wiggle with his tail and jus' looked like a bulldog before he takes holt. Th' blood were runnin' down f'om Pete's hand w'ere th' finger were gone, but he brought th' club

The Old Muskallonge of the Bend 41

down on th' musky's skull, kerblash! He tried to bite the stick, but missed it an' it hit him ag'in. Then he turned on his back an' w'en Pete swatted him 'crost th' belly he died. We weighed him and he weighed w'at I told you.

"Th' man w'at caught him an' put him in the tank were name Big Bill Gibbons. He were out in the woods choppin', but w'en he comes back to camp that night an' found us eatin' of his fish they was a fight w'at was a fight. The Swede didn' have but one hand, but it took all Big Bill could do to handle him, and he went to bed with one ear chewed off at that. Yes, sir, in the camps everything but guns an' knives goes. I ain' big myse'f—just 163 pounds stripped—an' I couldn' do nothin' with some o' the el'funts from th' north woods ef I wasn't a gouger from Gougeville. But gimme the other

42 The Old Muskallonge of the Bend

feller's thumb in m' mouth and m' own thumb hooked under his eye sorter deep, and I don' give a damn w'ether school takes in ur lets out. One time, w'en Little Ole Oleson an' Big Mike MacCartney gits hung out Ashlan' way th' ground they tore up measured twelve foot by nine foot six inches. Say, you could 'a' buried 'em in th' hole.

"But they ain' no muskies in this country like what they is up above hereaways. Take that St. Croix districk. That river runs four mile an hour, and w'en it ain' runnin' four mile it's runnin' six. It's clear, hard water an' th' bottom's rocky. Th' folks there uses a copper-wire line, 'cause th' fish lay deep an' any yuther line would be cut to pieces on th' bottom. They ties a gang o' hooks an' a arf poun' sinker on th' end o' it w'en they trolls and get right down to the pebbles. When a fish hits a line like that, ef you

The Old Muskallonge of the Bend 43

haven't got on buckskin mittens you lose a joint o' one o' your fingers, for it cuts like a razor.

"They used to be a musky in Indian Bend of the St. Croix w'at nobody couldn' ketch. Say, that fish was bigger'n a tree-butt and uglier'n Chippewa' squaw with th' measles. Pretty near every man in th' country tried him and he put it all over 'em. I tried him myse'f an' I lose forty-three feet four inches o' th' best copper wire w'at ever come down f'om Canada. Then a feller showed up w'at wrote for one o' them Eastern magazines with fancy covers an' fish an' deer pictures inside o' 'em that don' look like nothin'. He had on a bicycle soot, this feller, an' green stock-in's an' yaller shoes an' a big canvas hat an' a reel that he called a tarpon-reel, an' he said it cost him \$50. His lines was silk an' his spoons was th' best money could git, an' he

44 The Old Muskallonge of the Bend

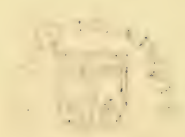
showed me a big medal he'd won in a casting tournament over somew'eres by th' ocean. This were his scheme: He says to me:

" 'Now, Fergy, you're to do the guidin' and I'm to do the fishin'. I don' want no talk in th' boat, 'cause talkin' skeers fish.'

"I says: 'All hell can't skeer a musky'; but he says: 'You put all your tongue-muscle inter th' oars and don' say nothin'.'

"He'd heerd o' th' big musky and had come after him. He says:

" 'Now, I want a picture o' that musky-lunge and I want it took when he's in th' air. I can sell it. W'en I gang him I'll pass th' rod to you an' you hold him. I'll have th' camera ready and when he leaves th' water an' shakes his head th' third time, like a dog tryin' to get a bone out'n his th'oat, I'll snap-shot him. They tell me that the third leap and shake is allers th' highest an' hardest.'



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"I says: 'They do?' And he says: 'They do.'

"Then I says: 'Ef you ain't crazy, somebody's been sellin' you bug-timber fer sound.' I says: 'W'en that fish gets up into th' air what'll I be doin'? What'll I be doin'?' I says: 'D'you s'pose four yoke o' oxes and forty silk lines like yourn could hol' that fish w'en he's in th' air like a balloon waitin' to have his picture took?'

"I says: 'You been to a Injun camp an' been drinkin' pohickaree.' I says: 'You better go back home an' do some more cast-in' an' git another tin medal.'

"He says: 'Shut up! You git \$2 a day and your grub. You pull the boat and hold the rod w'en I git ready.'

"Well, sir, we went out down around th' bend, me at th' oars an' this feller with th' braided silk line an' th' tarpon-reel an' th'



46 The Old Muskallonge of the Bend

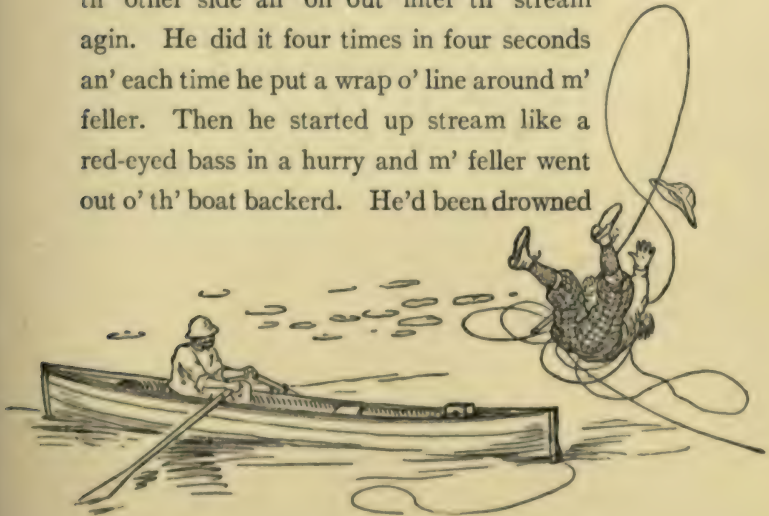
fotygraf machine in th' stern. Now, you see when you're in th' stern an' you hang a musky you want to git to th' first thwart right away and sit down on it an' face th' stern, so's you can see w'at you're doin'. An' th' guide he wants to wait a little w'ile an' then he wants to get inter th' stern with a revolver and plug Mr. Musky as soon as he comes within strikin' distance o' th' boat. Otherwise you don't git no fish. You know that much.

“Well, we went down the St. Croix three mile an' a hunderd yards until we come to th' bed o' lily-pads w'ere this here musky hung out and earned his board. My man made a cast good enough for anybody straight out into the pads an' fifty foot away. He were aimin' at a little patch o' clear water a yard acrost, an' he hit it in th' centre. He had on a hook big 'nough for a whale, an' a

The Old Muskallonge of the Bend 47

green frog three an' a quarter inches long f'om nose to tail. That frog, I should say, would 'a' weighed a quarter o' a poun' ur mebbe a half—a quarter anyway. It sunk two foot an' th' frog made just one kick an' then th' line begin to come into th' boat like lightning.

“My feller reeled for all he were worth, but th' best he could do couldn' keep th' line f'om piling up on th' water. Th' musky comes straight from th' pads to th' open water, crossed th' stern o' th' boat not three foot behind it, shot out inter th' stream for ten foot, dodged around th' bow, come down th' other side an' on out inter th' stream agin. He did it four times in four seconds an' each time he put a wrap o' line around m' feller. Then he started up stream like a red-eyed bass in a hurry and m' feller went out o' th' boat backerd. He'd been drowned



48 The Old Muskallonge of the Bend

to a moril certainty ef th' line hadn't broke between him an' th' musky. He come up all right howsomever an' I hauled him in.

"I says: 'Whyn't you hand me th' pole an' git out th' fotygraf box? I was waitin'.' I says: 'Say, you went back out'n the boat like a small kid in a hurry to learn how to dive.' I says: 'Say, you made a awful splash. A house falling in couldn' 'a' done no worse.'

"He looked at me an' th' green paint off'n his stockings run down an' stained the boat I couldn' git a word out'n him and we went back to th' hotel.

"He were game, though. Next day we tried it agin and th' musky wouldn' rise. Guess he had th' hook in his mouth yet and might 'a' been sick. A week arterward, howsomever, we hung him agin an' he broke more line. This time m' feller lef' the foty-

The Old Muskallonge of the Bend 49

graf outfit at home. That summer he lost every big line and every big hook an' spoon he had. He come back th' next summer an' did th' same thing. I arsked him what he was gittin' out'n it and he said he was gittin' lots o' stories. Then he winked.

"Nex' summer he showed up. This time he didn't have no rod an' no reel an' line. He were wearin' a blue flannel shirt, waterproof shoes, a sun-hat, an' canvas trousers, like a white man. He took me up to his room, unlocked his trunk and showed me a hunderd foot o' steel chain pretty nearly as big as a ox chain. He had a hook made out'n a old file by a blacksmith. The shank o' it were six inches long, it were two inches wide on th' curve, and th' barb o' it were pretty near as long as the first joint o' m' thumb.

50 The Old Muskallonge of the Bend

"He says: 'Is that damned musky here yet?'

"I says: 'You bet! He'll be here s'long's the river's here.'

"He says: 'Will he? You jus' watch your Uncle Sammy, boy.'

"Nex' day he takes me with him down th' St. Croix to th' bend. He picks out a soplin' on the bank w'at were twenty-two foot high an' he says to me to trim the limbs off'n it clear to th' top. I done it.

" 'Now,' he says, 'git as high as you kin and bend it down to th' ground for me.'

"That were easy and I swung down with th' top o' th' tree. It were a hickory saplin' an' tough as boardin'-house steak. W'ile I held th' tree he fastened one end o' th' chain to it and then we let it fly back straight. That left seventy-five foot of chain, or mebbe seventy-six foot, an' th' break in th' lily-pads

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w'ere th' musky kep' house wasn't more'n fifty feet away. He baited th' big hook with a bullfrog that mus' 'a' been a foot and a arf long from nose to hind-leg tip and he mus' 'a' weighed two pound ten ounces, ur mebbe eleven. M' feller jumped inter a piroog we'd brought an' paddled out to th' right spot. Then he dropped th' frog into th' water an' hustled for shore. He had a big red an' green float a foot across th' top hitched to th' chain six feet above the frog. We sit down on th' bank an' waited. Th' musky wasn't at home, but in half a hour we saw that float go un'er the water in a flash. Then begin the durndest circus you ever see. .

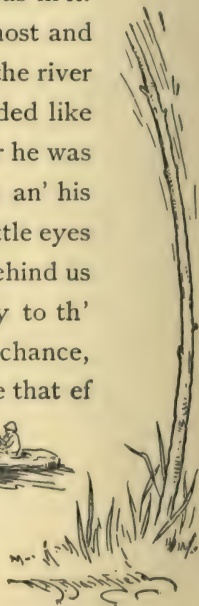
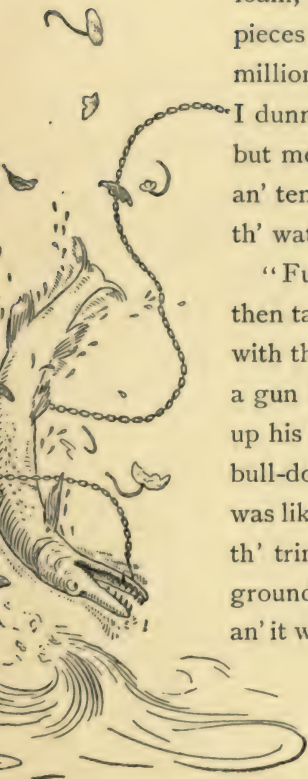
"They was a swirl in the water like a w'irlpool was there an' a fish come up two yard above th' top o' it an' went back with a kerflummux thet sent little waves over the lily-pads for a hundred yards in every direc-

52 The Old Muskallonge of the Bend

tion. You could hear 'em washin' agin th' bank as plain as if we'd been on th' St. Lawrence. Th' water was churned into foam, th' broken pads flew into th' air like pieces o' torn green cloth, th' sun made a million diamonds out'n th' flying drops.

I dunno how many times that fish leaped, but mebbe it was a hundred ur a hundred an' ten. Seemed to me like he was out'n th' water a good deal more'n he was in it.

“Fust he'd go down head foremost and then tail foremost. Then he'd hit the river with th' broad o' his side an' it sounded like a gun had went off. An' w'enever he was up his head was shakin' to an' fro an' his bull-dog jaws was snappin' an' his little eyes was like th' eyes o' a crazy man. Behind us th' trimmed sapling bent half way to th' ground an' sprung back w'en it got a chance, an' it was plain to me in a little w'ile that ef



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th' chain an' hook held th' strain o' it would wear the musky out some time ur ruther. In fifteen minutes his leaps was just as many an' as fast, but they wasn't so high. Then he got so that he could just fling himself clear o' th' water. Then he begin to swim around in little circles. The chain wouldn' give him no chanst to do no big work. Then he stopped still and five minutes afterward we could see the whitey yellow o' his belly showin' in th' roiled stream.

"We went out an' towed him to shore an' I went to th' hotel an' got a wagon an' hauled him in. He was th' only musky I ever see die o' plain worry. I guess it was shame as killed him. We put him on th' scales down at th' hotel barn w'ere they weighed th' hay for the horses and he run up just a hundred and ten pounds thirteen ounces before he was dressed. He measured six foot two and one-

54 The Old Muskallonge of the Bend

half inches from his front teeth to his tail-fork an' he was two feet through from back fin to belly-skin. The teeth on th' sides o' his jaws stood an inch and a arf high. When m' feller wasn't lookin' I pried a scale off'n his side and it was once and a half as big as a silver dollar. That fish was so old he had moss a arf-inch high on his back an' he didn' have but one eye. The other had been gouged out I guess by some hook ur ruther. I skinned him right there and his skin was a quarter of a inch thick. M' feller took th' hide home with him to have it stuffed an' he give me th' chain and th' big hook, which weren't of no use to me, sence th' only fish they was good for was dead. All m' feller said to me when he paid me off was:

“ ‘I allers was a fool and I left my camera at home this trip. I could 'a' sold them picters fur \$20.’ ”

The Old Muskallonge of the Bend 55

The man in the stern of the boat that drowed among the lilies—round-cupped and golden and swaying above the green clear water—looked hard at Fergy for a minute or two and then said:

“Didn’t your ‘feller,’ as you call him, give you the red and green float also?”

“No,” said Fergy, “he took it home with him. Said he wanted it as a mementer.”

“Well, when you are through with that weedless hook you’re holding to, let me have it and I’ll try to catch a muskallonge for your supper—just a trifier of say thirty or forty pounds.”

“Yass,” said Fergy releasing the hook and putting his sloping knotted shoulders into the oars as the boat shot out upon the lake, “they don’ grow down here like w’at they do up on the St. Croix.”

SKUNKS AND THEIR DOMINANT INTELLECTS



ROUND the camp on Pickerel Lake hung an odor, heavy, far-reaching, inexpressibly offensive. The hour was 9 at night. A fire of hemlock bark, small but intensely hot, glowed on the bare ground, giving scarcely enough light by which to distinguish the great tree boles. Fergy sat humped within five feet of it, his dark face bent low over his hands, in which was a tangled fishing-line. The other man lay at ease, smoking hard to keep off the mosquitoes. Fergy threw up his head with the action of a startled buck tossing his antlers. His nostrils flared wide and blew out a deep breath of disgust.

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"That feller," he said in reference to the skunk, "is wanderin' 'round lookin' f'r sleepy birds. He seen us and he jus' wanted to let us know he's on earth. Nex' to a Injun I do hate a skunk."

"Why don't you take the rifle and go after him?" the other man asked, lazily. "He must be close by."

Fergy snorted with contempt. "He may be close by," he answered, "ur he may be a mile away. Th' smell bein' here ain' no sign that th' smell-maker's here. Besides, I ain' los' no skunks. I killed one onct an' he fell on a flat rock out'n th' woods. I went by that way a week atter an' th' rock smelt jus' as strong as it did five minits atter I done th' killin'. I went by that way a month later an' it still smelt. I went by that way nex' spring an' it smelt yet. I was 'long there in th' summer, th' smell was git-

58 Skunks: their Dominant Intellects

tin' sorter faint, but w'en th' sun shined on th' rock it smelt. Four years atterwards I stopped by that rock f'r cur'osity. Th' sun was shinin' down on it, an' it were so hot you couldn' hardly bear your han' on it. It smelt—strong. I knowed a feller over in Messota onct that killed a skunk with a hoe. Eighteen years atter that hoe would smell if you stuck it in th' fire and het it."

"Mosquitoes are bad to-night," said the other man.

"Yep, they air bad; but they ain't nothin' to w'at I seen. I seen skeeters on this very p'int so thick that if you jabbed a knife in th' air it'd come back with two ur three drops o' blood on th' blade. I seen mosquitoes so thick that hittin' 'em with a paddle sounded like slappin' a side o' beef. I seen 'em so thick I couldn' see nothin'. I seen 'em shade th' lake on a bright day like

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you was holdin' a umbreller over it. Sometimes horses an' cows is smothered by skeeters. They jus' breathe 'em in tell they git they lungs full an' then they cain't blow 'em out. I been half smothered m'sc'f."

"But about skunks," said the other man.

"Yass, 'bout shunks. Skunks is mos' s'prisin' things. Skunks is got sense like a lead hoss. They c'n tell four hundred yards off in thick woods whuther ur not you got a gun. Ef you got a gun, you don' see no skunk. Ef you ain' got a gun, th' skunk gits right in your path and stays there. The neares' you get to him, the more he humps his back. He jus' waits f'r you. He knows in reason thet you cain't come much closer. W'at's the end o' that? You gotter git out'n the way. It do make a man mad to have to dodge and creep through the brush givin'

60 Skunks: their Dominant Intellects

the road to a measly thing like a skunk, but you gotter sneak roun'.

“'Cose some skunks is got more sense as other skunks, but they all got sense. I knowed a skunk onct what lived over by Swamp Lake. I see him arf a dozen times an' he were big as a houn' dog. That skunk was m'leecious. He'd strike your trail and git 'long it faster'n you could walk with a heavy pack on your back, an' fust thing you knowed he'd be right in your way. Then he'd hump his back an' grin. When you crooked yourse'f half double with the pack an' worked your way roun' him through the bushes, he'd grin harder. Half a mile further on there he'd be agin. It jus' done him good to make you crawl. He wanted to show you that though you was a man and he was a four-footed critter with nothin' to him but tail an' fur an' smell, he could make

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you hunt tall timber w'enever he'd mind to. One day that skunk made me git out'n th' trail five times in two mile. I never went to hunt him 'cause I was 'fraid o' him. Ol' Johnny Mushhead, th' Chippewa' med'cine drunkard, said they was evil sperrets in th' beast and I b'lieve him. You couldn' git no guide to monkey with that skunk. We jus' give him th' road an' let it go at that.

"Finerly they come 'long a chap w'at wanted that skunk skin th' wuss kind. He went after him with a gun and 'cose he didn' git him. Then he had one o' these Mauser pistils sent up f'om Chicarger. It was a gun you could carry in yo' hind pocket and it'd shoot a mile.

"Th' feller come whistlin' down th' trail an' the skunk he says to hisself: 'Here's fun f'r me.' He traviled behin' th' feller f'r a hunderd an' eighty rod an' then showed up

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in th' trail an' begin to throw up his back. Th' feller paid no 'tention a-tall an' th' skunk jus' humped an' grinned. The closer th' feller got th' more th' beast grinned. When th' feller got within fifteen feet he stopped, th' Mauser showed up an' begin to talk. Eighteen times in nineteen seconds that gun went off. Th' skunk didn't have no time to think 'bout grinnin'. He got fixed so's you could 'a' sifted baled hay through him so quick that it parlized his senses. W'en th' feller drug him inter camp he had th' mos' s'prized look on his face you ever see—th' skunk had. It seemed to say:

“‘ Here I be, a pore woods an'mul attacted by some o' them there improved moddun machineries. How could I be expected to git up agin a game like that?’

“I felt sorry f'r him, I reely did, though

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he done me a heap o' trubble in his time. He weighed forty-three poun's fourteen ounces even, an' his skin were big 'nough to make a bedquilt f'r a siz'bul child. I don' never pass by Swamp Lake these days 'ithout tears comin' inter my eyes 'bout that skunk, ef he was mean to me. It seemed sorter low down bringin' a Mauser gun 'way up in these here woods jus' to fool as smart a beast as he were."

"Do you think it will rain to-night?" asked the other man.

"I dunno. But that Mauser skunk weren't nothin' a-tall 'longside o' a skunk w'at kep' the women folks at Feely's hotel sittin' up in terror o' they lives f'r a month and had ol' Feely gittin' up in the night and shoutin' Gaelic. Feely's shack is over on Pike Lake. Swell guys goes there f'om all over th' country to catch muskies an' sometimes they gits

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'em an' sometimes they don'. You need a good guide to git muskies, an' I ain' never guided there. This here summer I'm talkin' 'bout ol' Feely started in to raise chickens on a monster scale. He turned his root-houses inter hen-houses an' his guests was to do without pertaters an' sich. He got nearly a thousan' chicks out o' th' shells in the early spring—him an' his women folks—an' he laid off to feed th' people on chickens an' save meat bills. 'Long in July them chicks was gettin' to be 'bout the right size. Four of 'em would 'a' made a good meal f'r a hungry man and they was clutterin' up the whole place. Soon's daylight they weren't no git-tin' no sleep f'r the cacklin' an' twitterin', an' Feely was countin' th' dollars he were goin' to git out'n th' musky fellers.

"One mornin' he goes down to one o' his hen-houses and th'owed open th' door.' Bout

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a hundred fryin'-size chicks buzzed out skeered arf to death. They run two hundred an' eight yards 'fo' they stopped and Feely looked after 'em like he didn't know whuther they was crazy ur he were crazy. Then he went inside and looked 'roun'. Fust thing he stepped on was a dead chicken an' in twenty minutes he had forty-eight piled up outside. Th' th'oat o' every one o' 'em was cut jus' un'er th' lower bill an' his blood was sucked.

"One o' the guides says 'Ferret.' 'Nother one says 'Wildcat.' But ol' John Rivers he says right away: 'Skunk!' Ol' John Rivers knowed as much about these woods as I know. Skunks w'en they git inter a brood o' chickens is too dainty ter eat th' meat. They jus' wants blood an' they gits it.

"Well, ol' Feely talked a yard o' Gaelic—

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ur maybe a yard an' a arf o' it—an' then he went up to th' hotel an' fixed up his trap. It was jus' a common steel trap, but it were big 'nough to hol' a b'ar. He set it out after dark and baited it with a live chicken. He put it on th' trail the skunk had made th' night before an' went to bed happy. He says:

“ ‘Be th' black dog o' Cashel, I'll have th' pelt o' the murderin' varmint in th' mornin', pl'ase God, as sure's Brian Boro kilt min intirely f'r th' good o' th' Church an' to see 'em kick,' he says.

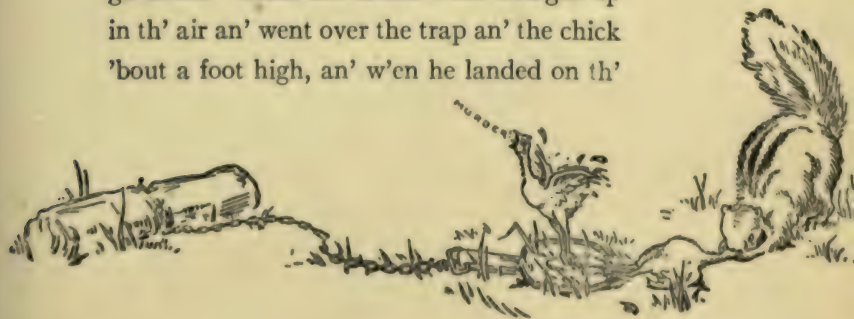
“Nex' mornin' they was a dead chicken in th' trap with his th'oat cut jus' under the bill an' fifty-six dead uns in another hen-house. Th' trap weren't sprung.

“Ol' John Rivers looked at the pile o' chickens an' he says that skunk mus' be as big 's a calf an' have teeth on him like a

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rip-saw. He says he's goin' to sit up that night an' watch. He tol' me 'bout it this spring w'en we was helpin' to send the log-drive down th' Flambeau.

"It was a bright moonlight night an' long 'bout 1 in th' mornin' Rivers was lying be-hin' a log near th' trail w'at run to the hen-house w'en he see th' skunk comin' straight f'r th' trap, w'at had two live chickens in it this time. He were prancin' sideways, with his back humped an' his tail curled an' havin' a good time thinkin' 'bout w'at he was goin' to git. Rivers didn't have no gun an' it were his play to keep still an' look. Th' skunk walked up to th' trap an' then he walked all roun' it six times. Th' two chicks squawked terribul, but they couldn' git loose. Then the skunk went straight up in th' air an' went over the trap an' the chick 'bout a foot high, an' w'en he landed on th'



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other side the head of one o' the chickens was atween his front paws and th' bird was stretched out straight. Th' skunk cut his th'oat an' drunk his blood an' then jumped over th' trap an' stretched th' other chicken in th' same way. Then he started toward th' hen-house still prancin' sideways with his back bowed. Jus' then Rivers stuck his head over th' log; th' skunk seen him in a second, give three straight jumps and was gone back inter th' woods.

"Nex' day Rivers tol' Feely as it wern't no use to try to ketch a an'mul like that with a trap, an' the thing to do was to shut up t' hen-house tight so's he couldn't git in. They went all roun' th' house an' caulked it up as tight as ef it was a boat an' they was lookin' f'r stormy weather. Feely he says the hen-house was so tight the chicks would smother, but Rivers says he'll cut a hole in th' roof.

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The walls was slick an' plum' an' the eaves o' th' roof hung over so's no skunk nur nothin' could climb up—an' that's w'at they done. Knowin' the skunk couldn' git in they all took a drink an' went to bed. Nex' mornin' they was thirty-three chickens dead with they th'oats cut an' piled up outside th' house—piled up on th' groun' as neat as a man could a done it an' they weren't a drop o' blood lef' in th' bunch.

“Th' thing was gittin' on th' wimmin's nerves strong by this time, an' they cried a lot w'ile ol' Feely talked some more Gaelic an' John Rivers cussed in good Amerikin. Th' gals said they'd never sleep anuther wink until the sperrit that was doin' th' do was got rid of somehow, an' Rivers said th' nex' night he'd git Mr. Skunk 'r lose both his laigs. He got him a 10-gauge muzzle-load-in' shotgun an' he chocked her up with two

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phandfuls of owder and twenty-three low-mould buckshot in each barril. Then nobody 'bout the hotel said a word for th' res' of the day, 'cept a young feller f'om Peoria, w'at had come up with a bar'l o' that Illynoy whisky, an' he put in th' time telling ghost stories to the servant gals. 'Long 'bout 10 o'clock that night Rivers come out on th' front po'ch, luggin' his cannon, and said ef we heard anything like forty trees fallin' down that would be th' voice o' Ol' Betsy.

"We sit there till 11 o'clock w'ile the feller tol' his ghost tales an' slipped upstairs ev'ry now and then to look inter his private stock—one of them fellers w'at never knowed a guide could git thirsty—until finerly we heerd a roar like the roar o' the win' when it comes down off Superior an' the hemlocks is throwin' thirty somersets afore they hits th' groun'. Then they was the patter o'

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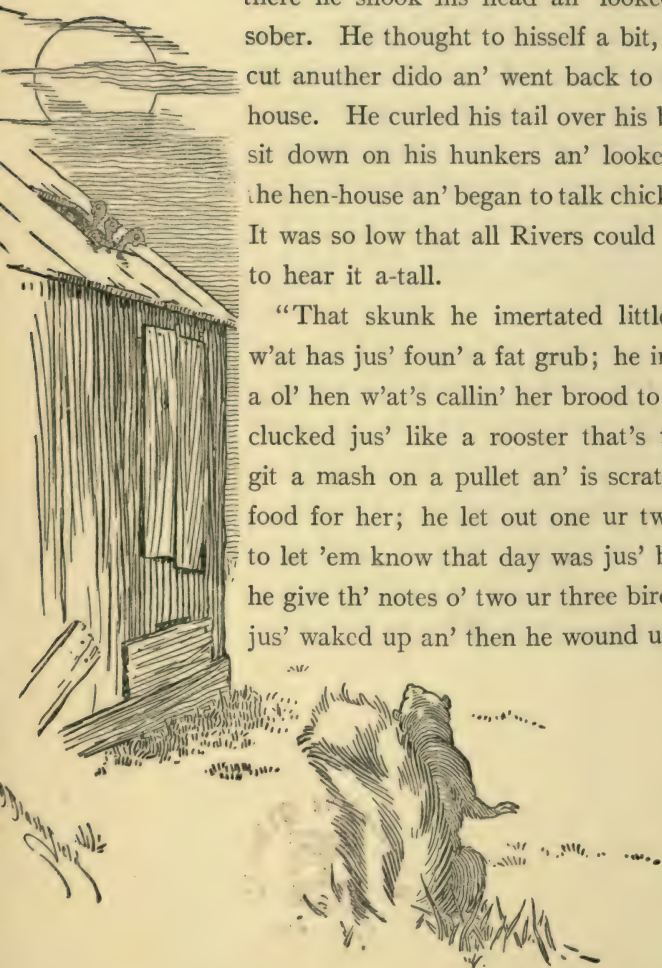
feet an' here comes Rivers, tetchin' the groun' only in high places an' jus' brushin' 'em with the ball o' his foot at that. He run over Feely, who rolled on the yearth an' spoke Gaelic, an' bumped into the feller an' knocked four quarts o' Peoria suddint death out'n him, an' stumbled over a dinin'-room gal, w'at had fainted, an' bumped agin me, w'ere he fetched up. We took him inter the hotel office and th'owed a bucket o' ice water on him an' w'en he come to he tol' us about it.

"Rivers had went out an' took his stand behin' a ol' birch stump an' leaned his gun agin it an' waited. Bimeby he seen th' skunk comin' down his trail, still laughin' to hisself an' humpin' his back. Ev'ry how-comeyousoinaw'ile he'd stop an' cut a extry step an' resoom his cakewalk. W'en he got to th' hen-house he looked all roun' it an'

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tried to fin' a place to git in. Then he come back down th' trail to the place w'ere th' trap had been an' w'en he see it weren't there he shook his head an' looked sorter sober. He thought to hisself a bit, then he cut anuther dido an' went back to th' hen-house. He curled his tail over his back an' sit down on his hunkers an' looked up at the hen-house an' began to talk chicken talk. It was so low that all Rivers could do were to hear it a-tall.

"That skunk he imertated little chicks w'at has jus' foun' a fat grub; he imertated a ol' hen w'at's callin' her brood to her; he clucked jus' like a rooster that's tryin' to git a mash on a pullet an' is scratchin' up food for her; he let out one ur two crows to let 'em know that day was jus' breakin'; he give th' notes o' two ur three birds w'at's jus' waked up an' then he wound up with a



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exack imertation o' th' Irish gal in th' hotel kitchen w'at was used to feedin' th' chickens. Rivers he said that you couldn't 'a' tol' th' diff'runce between th' skunk an' th' Irish lady f'r a dolluh.

"Then out'n the hole w'at was in the roof them chickens begin to come one after another like they was crazy to breathe a little fresh air an' freedom an' git som'p'n' to eat o' th' good things w'at was goin'. As fas' as they come an' ith th' groun' the skunk'd nail 'em, right under th' lower bill ev'ry time, an' in less'n two minutes he had a pile o' 'em he couldn' 'a' jumped over ef ev'ry wolf in th' North Woods had 'a' been after him.

"Jus' then Rivers reached f'r his cannon. He was tremblin' so that it slipped out'n his han's, both barrils went off an' tore a hole in the yearth you could 'a' buried a ox team in,



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the skunk he laughed an' humped f'r th' bushes, an' Rivers he didn' remember nothin' more.

"We went down to th' hen-house w'en he got through talkin'. Feely went in front with a rifle, I come nex' with a axe, the feller f'om Peoria come along with a seven-shootin' pistil made to skeer skeeters with, an' the gals brung up the rear 'cause they was afraid to stay at th' house. There was the chickens sure 'nough, 272 of 'em, th' hole in th' roof, an' the grave Rivers's cannon had dug, but they wasn't no skunk. He never come back no more, but mebbe that was because they weren't no more chickens. The guests that summer lived on fish an' canned goods an' stories 'bout the reason why they didn' git no chicken meat. I b'li've that skunk were the sperrit o' th' one the feller sprung th' Mauser on.

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It stands to reason that they weren't no two such an'muls in th' world."

Fergy got the last tangle out of the silk line as he spoke and looked at the other man for remonstrance or inquiry, but the brier-root of the other man had fallen from his mouth, he was lying on his back and if his eyes had been open he would have seen a host of stars.

THE DANCE OF THE HERONS



At the noon hour, on the high bank at the south side of Round Lake, in a forest of birches, beeches, balsam pines, and hemlocks, Fergy, on his knees near a roaring fire, was busily skinning bass. The other man was stretched at full length watching him. No Wisconsin guide ever scales a bass and cleans it in the legitimate manner. It is too much like work. With a huge sharp knife in his right hand Fergy held the fish, belly upward, its tail pointing from him. A swift draw of the blade toward him took off the ventral fins. The bass was turned over and a similar swipe took off its back fins. A slight incision was made just below each

gill and the skin was stripped down to the tail in two solid flakes. A stroke of the knife took off the head and the entrails came with it. There was the fish, transformed into two slabs of white, tender flesh, ready for the frying-pan. No guide ever broils a bass, or bakes it, or makes court bouillon of it. That, too, is too much like work. Fergy was able to handle a couple of two-pound bass a minute in this fashion without exerting himself especially.

"Up at th' far end o' th' north fork o' the Flambeau las' year," he said, "they was a Frenchman name Edouard Blanc, an' we called him Black Ed f'r short. He was th' fastest' man with a knife in all them parts an' was able to keep a fish in th' air f'r a hour at a time. He got into a slashin' match with Joe Humphreys, a logger f'om Canady, at a dance w'at were had at Bill Hamilton's

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shack. Joe were slow, but he were mighty shore, an' we buried Black Ed nex' day. He didn' have but two cuts on him, but they was put in to count. Joe were skinned in twenty places, but not hurted bad. It don' pay to be too skilful sometimes, but at fixin' fish f'r th' pan Ed were a shore neepul sultry." [Ne plus ultra.]

Fergy reached upward with a swift motion of his left hand, brought it down with the fingers closed, inserted carefully the thumb and forefinger of his right hand and brought them out, holding imprisoned a mosquito. He looked at it curiously, then showed it to his companion. On the body of the insect, just under a wing, was a smaller insect, a little round red bug, so small that it was hardly visible to the eye. The guide mashed the mosquito with an air of satisfaction, threw it away, and said:

"That fixes 'em. Two weeks f'om now they won' be a skeeter within a hunderd mile o' here. Want to bet on it?"

"No," said his employer, "I don't want to bet on it. I want fish and I want it right away."

"Yep," said Fergy, composedly lifting the frying-pan, almost red-hot, from the fire and dashing water into it to clean it. "One time they come a feller here f'om Milwaukee. He were full o' beer an' pride. He uster tell me tales a mile long 'bout beer duels in Milwaukee an' men in Milwaukee w'at hadn' drunk a drop o' water in fifteen year—jus' beer all the time; tales 'bout how he handled sixty glasses o' beer in a hour an' a arf, an' 'bout men w'at had their coffins made in the shape o' beer kaigs, an' 'bout men that took baths in beer ev'ry mornin', jus' like I swims in th' lake. I tol' him that a man that'd drink

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beer when he could git alcohol didn' have no more sense as a string o' dead fish, but he didn' git mad.

"Well, besides talkin' 'bout beer in Milwaukee, he were allers wantin' to bet—bet you on th' weight o' a fish, on th' leng'h o' time a musky'd fight after he was hooked, ur w'ich man could make a fly light on a lump o' sugar fust, ur 'bout two drops of water runnin' down a winder pane in th' hotel, ur anythink.

"I ketched a skeeter one day an' showed him th' little red bug, an' said they'd all be gone in two weeks an' he bet me \$10 right away ag'inst five days' guidin' that they wouldn't be gone in fifteen days. He never seen a red bug or a skeeter before, but that was w'at he bet right off'n the reel. It was m' own game and o' course I hadder take him up. Ten days—or maybe eleven days

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—arterward I couldn't find a skeeter no-
wheres, but he said he seen 'em ev'ry day.
On the fourteenth day I claimed th' money,
but heswore he seen a bunch o' skeetersearly
that mornin' when he got up. Nex' day
he come to me with his handshet and opened
it and a arf dozen flew out an' went away.

"I knowed in reason that they wouldn'
live till night, but I hadder pull my arms off
for five days with that feller, jes' the same,
and listen to tales 'bout beer in Milwaukee
ev'ry minit o' the day. After he went away
I got a letter from him, sayin' he was sorry
for a woods orphin an' child o' nater, but I
knowed too much to be healthy an' he'd
ketched them skeeters a week before and
kep' 'em alive under a glass tumbler in his
room. He weighed 182 pound 10 ounces,
mos' of it beer an' pretzels," said Fergy,
drawing a deep breath and glaring at his

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listener, "but w'en he comes back to this camp I'm going to make him think he don't weigh as much as a heron's feather. Pulled my arms off, I did, an' listened to him."

"That's right," said his auditor. "Make him stand still and then step on his feet. How're the fish coming on?"

"Fine," Fergy answered, putting the first one in the pan and looking reflectively at the others. "Talkin' about herons, though, one night on Pickerel Lake I see th' dadbingdest sight I ever see. A man come up from Chicago with a jacklight made to order out'n aluminum. It was mighty light an' burnt this new gas and give a shine like a shack afire. It made his head hot to wear it and he give it to me, an' I wanted to try it. I gits in a boat on Pickerel on a thick cloudy night an' starts to paddle along, aimin' to shine a deer an' git meat for breakfas' an'

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terbacker fer th' hide. I paddle an' paddle an' I never see a eye. Bimeby th' clouds rolled away an' then a big moon come out, makin' ev'rythin' as light as day. I'd clean forgot about its bein' moontime, an' co'se the jack weren't no more good.

"I were at th' far eend o' th' lake an' ten, or mebbe fifteen, rod f'om me was a little island o' sand that stood 'bout two feet out o' th' water an' was mebbe half a acre big. It didn' have no grass on it nur bushes, jus' plain sand. I knowed it well o' co'se—ketched many a bass near to it—and I'd allers noticed it was marked up with a lot o' tracks mos' prodijus, but I never seen nothin' on it. Well this night as I sit in the boat an' take th' jack off'n my hat an' try to put out that new gas an' caint, I hear a mos' awful swoosh in th' air—sounded like a tree jus' half way to the groun'—an' I



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look up an' see a big blue heron pitch on th' sand. I'm thinkin' I'll try a shot at him jus' to say I killed som'p'n', when they was another swoosh an' another swoosh an' another swoosh, an' th' herons begin to pile down fas' f'om ev'ry direction to onct.

"I flung the jack inter th' bottom o' th' boat an' throwed m' coat over it, an' jus' sit there an' watched. Bimeby they was thirty-nine herons on th' sand island an' I were thinkin' that was a odd number, when I hear a swoosh bigger'n all th' other swooshes put together an' th' king-pin heron o' th' whole worl' come down. Say, he was so big that when he dropped his legs to light they looked like fishin'-poles; that's a fact. I see herons before that stand a good six foot high, ur mebbe six foot two inches, but this heron was eight foot ef he was an inch, and I think sometimes maybe he was nine foot, or may-

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be nine foot three. Anyhow, when he lit the others dried up their croakin' an' squallin' an' stood quiet as a polecat when he's makin' for a hen-house. D'reckly the big one give a whoop you could 'a' heerd five mile, an' when he whooped the others sorter backed away f'om him until they formed a succle 'bout ten yards acrost. All th' middle o' it was open space an' in this space the king-pin stood up straight an' turned aroun' and aroun', stiff as a poker. He was mighty slow 'bout it, but steady. Ev'ry now an' then he let out another whoop an' ev'ry time he whooped th' others bowed they heads away down until they bills mos' touched the sand. I seed then what was up. It was a heron-dance, an' the big chief was warmin' hisself up first so's he could take a intrust in the proceedin's.

"Th' others hadder git up steam th' bes'

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they could. After this had kep' up for ten minutes, or maybe eleven, the chief kicked out one leg and brought it aroun', and say, he made a ring that must 'a' been a yard an' a half wide. Then he kicked out th' other leg an' brought it aroun' th' same way. Then he hopped up an' down straight an' hard five times. That bird was so heavy that w'en he hit th' sand I could hear th' bump jus' as plain as I see you. Then he give a final whoop, spread his wings out like a man holdin' out his elbows, an' pranced to th' far eend o' th' island. T'others swung in behind him, walkin' two and two an' prancin' jus' like him. They made th' round o' th' sand three times this way. Then they stopped an' give one mighty holler that must 'a' sounded over in th' next county.

“Say, I been to dances in loggin'-camps and dances in shacks w'ere th' wood alcohol

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was common'r water; dances at Swede weddin's, dances at Norwejun houses w'en th' crop was in and th' last winter's beer bar'l was bust open; I been to French dances in Canady and Dutch dances in Ashlan' and 'Merican dances in Fifel' an' Chippeway dances up on th' res'vation, but I never see no dance like that dance when them herons got to goin' good an' hard. They was twenty couple facin' each other, with th' big boss bossin', and they went at it like they was out f'r fun. They was paired off, too, a gent to a lady as natchul as life, an' th' lady that was with th' king-pin was bigger'n any other there. This was in th' early fall, when th' young herons is able to look out f'r theyselves, and their poppers an' mommers has lots of time f'r foolishness.

"Well, sir, they first-four-forrerd-and-backed, an' second-four-forrerd-an'-backed,

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an' all promenaded. Then th' side fours forrerd-an'-backed and they all promenaded agin. Then they allemanded an' sashayd, an' sesashed. Then they swung corners, the gent takin' hold o' the lady's elbow with his bill, gentle like. Then they balanced all. Then it were ladies to the right an' gents stand steady, gents to th' right an' ladies stand steady, the gran' chain, ladies to th' centre and gents bills-all-aroun', makin' a succle. Say, when I see them herons, ev'ry gent with his bill holdin' to the tail o' the gent in front o' him, I nearly rolled out'n the boat. Then the gents went to the centre and the ladies made a ring.

“Then they did a half a dozen other figgers and went through th' whole business agin. You never see better time kep'. They hadn't no music, o' co'se, 'cept what they made theyselves, but that were good enough.

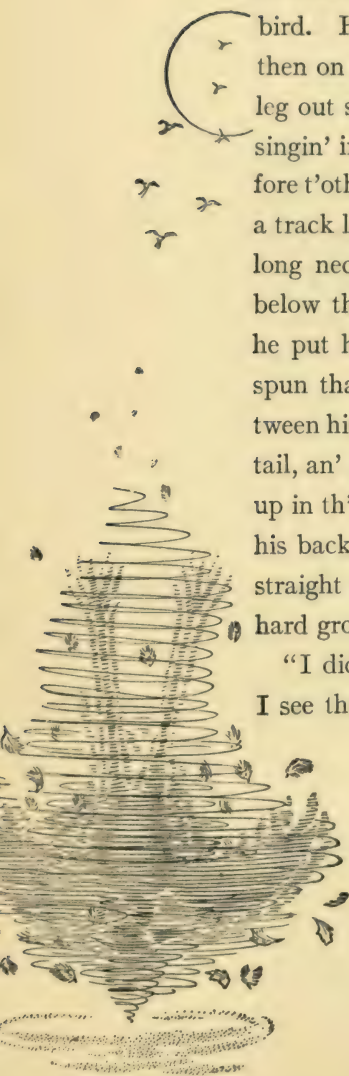
They jus' squawked all together, not loud but even, one-two-three, one-two-three, one-two-three, beatin' out th' time, an' say, it was so reg'lar that human folks could 'a' danced to it. I foun' it gittin' inter my blood arter a while, an' w'en I noticed myse'f I was beatin' a foot on the boat jus' like I was in the thing f'r keeps. Th' herons didn't have no sets and spells in between for res' like we have. They jus' went straight ahead for a hour and a arf, ur mebbe three-quarters, without ever a let-up, an' I begin to think they'd keep it up all night. I'd shore 'a' set there and watched 'em till daylight did appear. I never see anythink better.

"Bimeby, howsomever, I glimpsed that th' Big Boss was gittin' res'less. Things was too slow to suit him and he sorter fancied hisself as a dancer, I guess. Anyhow, without a whoop o' warnin', he jus' jumped into th'

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middle o' the island an' begin pirootin' all to hisself. My! My! but he was a active bird. He spun roun' fust on one foot an' then on t'other. When he spun he helt one leg out straight f'om his body an' it made a singin' in th' air. Then he put one foot before t'other an' sorter wriggled across, makin' a track like a snake's. Then he th'owed his long neck back, caught holt o' his lef' leg below th' knee, and spun that way. Then he put his right leg over his shoulders and spun that way. Then he put his head between his knees, brought it up, laid it over his tail, an' give 'em a whirl. Then he hopped up in th' air, turned a half-somersault, lit on his back, spread out his wings, helt his legs straight up an' worked his neck ag'inst th' hard ground.

"I didn' know what this move was until I see that he begin to revolve by means o'



his neck-holt an' git faster an' faster. I guess that were his prize play. Pretty soon he was gittin' round with consid'able speed. Then he got swifter an' swifter until in a minit ur two, ur mebbe three, th' lines o' him begin to blur. A minute after that he was like a big gray top jus' spinnin' an' spinnin'. The whir o' him went out over th' lake like th' buzzin' o' forty million, or mebbe fifty million, bees, an' th' sand flew like rain. It hit some o' 'em in th' eyes an' it drifted on th' backs o' th' others. They shook it off sorter impatient, but more of it come. They was a fog o' it all over th' island in a little w'ile an' livin' in it must 'a' been disagreeable.

"They was a feller here onct f'om Frisco and he tol' me about th' sandstorms out there, an' I thought o' 'em w'en I see that big bird whirlin' on his back. I guess he

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was th' only heron in th' worl' could do that act, an' he was sorter stuck on it. He didn' show no signs o' lettin' up an' the others w'at had stood for his play a long time got tired o' it. Anyhow, they knowed they was thirty-nine o' them and only one o' him. All at once, without any warnin', they let out a big squawk an' piled on him.

"Say, you never see a fight like that fight. He was up d'reckly, standin' two foot higher'n any o' 'em, an' his bill went back and forrerd like Black Ed's knife. They was more force to it, though. So many o' 'em was on th' sand an' strikin' at him that they mixed up with each other an' they couldn' get at him to onct. He made a dozen passes with his bill an' cleared a space f'r hisself and then tried to fly, but three hit him on th' back at th' same time an' he had to stay an' see th' thing through. The fog o' sand set-

tled right away, but its place was took by a fog o' feathers. Heron plumes was flyin' thicker'n gnats on a June evenin'. It was jus' a big, gray, jumpin', strikin', heavin' mass to me, so far as th' gang were concerned, but I could see th' old king-pin mighty plain, because he were taller an' that head o' his went stabbin' so fas' it was in a flicker all th' time. The others kep' up a awful noise, clutterin' and squawkin' an' whoopin' to each other, but he never said a word. He was jus' as dumb as a Leech Lake Injun when you git him down and hol' him and smash him good an' hard, and there cain't be nothin' dumber'n that.

"Now, a heron c'n hit a blow like th' downstroke o' a buck's front hoof. Ef you wing one an' give him a chanst he'll sink his bill inter you a good three inches, an' this feller could lunge worse'n any heron I ever

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hearn tell of. In fifteen minits, ur mebbe twenty, I could see that th' ring he was clearin' for hisself was gittin' bigger. They was dead or hurt birds all roun' him, but he never let up f'r a minit. Slowly but shorely he was beatin' 'em off in front, and I notice that he was backin' a inch at a time. I didn' know what he was up to at first, but when he was gone two-thirds o' th' way acrost th' island I see he was makin' for a place where it went off inter th' water sudden an' deep. It was his idee to git the lake behin' him so's they hadder come at him in front. He'd been bad hurted by herons gittin' at his back. Mos' o' his tail feathers was broke ur pulled out, an' they was some blood on his shoulders, but my! he was game!

“He got the aidge o' the lake un'er him after a w'ile and then he got faster with his

bill. He knocked 'em over like they was tamarack poles, an' sometimes one o' 'em would lay still. I dunno how long th' fight lasted, an' I'm a pretty good jedge o' time when they's a row on. I seen lots o' 'em in th' camp, but this here muss were so savidge an' fas' that I clean los' count o' th' minits. I thinks to myse'f that he had to go un'er, big an' brave as he were, an' I begin to feel sorter sorry for him, when all of a sudden them what was left give it up, riz in th' air altogether, an' flewed. Some o' 'em flewed mighty solemn an' slow, too, I tell you. The Big Boss see 'em go and straightened hissself till he must 'a' been ten foot high. Then he let out a whoop that made his other whoops sound like a w'isper. I hear a steamboat on the Mississip onct turn loose her w'istle but, shucks, she weren't in it. That were a whoop that made th' hemlocks fifty rod

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acrost the lake shake like a high wind was blowin'. What you think he done then?"

Fergy removed the browning fish from the pan and laid them on a tin platter and stood with arms akimbo, a look of sober inquiry on his dark face.

"I don't know," said the listener. "These fish seem to be about right."

The guide poured a cup of cold water into the pot to settle the boiling coffee, glanced around impressively and said:

"I'll be dadbinged ef he didn't teeter to th' centre o' th' island, all bloody an' pecked an' hacked an' pulled like he were, throw hisse'f on his back an' do that w'irl dance over agin, jus' to show 'em that he weren't to be druv inter nothin'. You bet he was game! I could 'a' shot him, but I paddled away an' lef' him buzzin' roun' an' roun'."

HOMERIC SACRIFICE OF THE RED-EYED BASS



HERE had been heavy rains to the northeast and the south fork of the Flambeau was in half-flood. Down Barnaby Rapids the iron-tinted waters were pouring, leaping over the rocks in waves two feet high and of the color of dark molasses candy. Each white-fringed and ebon at bottom, they danced in rout. Fergy shot the boat into a stiller place made by a small indentation of the shore, drove the butt of a hickory pole into a crevice of the stony bottom, and so held the craft, standing half crouched in the stern, the upper part of the pole under his arm.

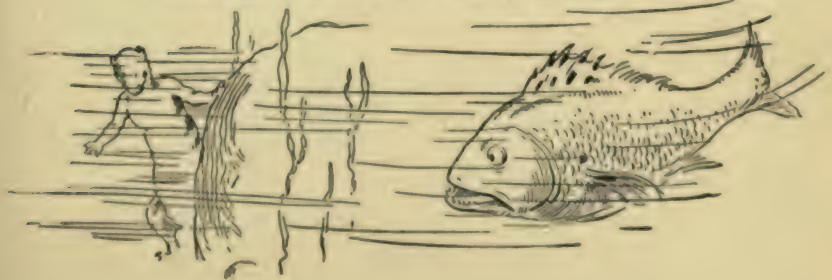
"Red-eyes in here," he said briefly, feeling in his trousers pocket for a hunk of black tobacco, and the other man made his cast.

"I brung a feller here onct," Fergy said, "an' he were a preacher f'om Bosting. Had on \$4,000 wuth o' clothes an' a rod w'at must a cost a millyun. Hooked a arf-poun' red-eye, fainted f'om egsitement, an' fell out. Rolled 36 yard 8 inches down-stream, fas'. You never see no w'eel go roun' like w'at that feller went roun'. I let th' boat drif' an' feeshed him out; packed him four mile to camp on my back; stuck him ag'inst th' fire an' dried him. He had 'nough Flambeau wattuh in him to float a raf' o' twenty-five millyun feet an' it took him a long time to dry. W'en he come to he arsked me ef I couldn't go back an' fin' his rod. I said—"

"What did you say?" the other man inquired with some show of interest.

"But that ain' w'at makes me recklec' th' place. Five years ago, ur thereabouts, they useter be roun' here th' mos' stranges' mink w'at ever hunted feesh. He weren't so mighty big f'r a Flambeau mink, 'bout fifteen poun' ur so, but he were colored funny. Minks is black, ur mighty near black, in gin'rul, an' that's all th' color they got, but this here mink were striped. He had yeller rings roun' him, rings 'bout th' color o' walnut leaves w'en th' fros' has hit 'em hard, an' he were purty to look at. He were better outside 'n he were inside, howsomever. Like yuther minks, he lived on feesh, but he weren't content with eatin' his belly full an' goin' t' sleep. Fus' off, he killed all he wanted to an' let th' bodies float 'way an' w'en he got tired o' killin' then he went to eatin'.

"His range were f'r a arf mile up 'n down



th' river an' he ruint five good holes f'r me. I'd bring th' fellers out an' tell 'em here was w'ere they ketch bass f'r sure, an' they don' ketch no bass, an' they say I'm a liar, an' I know it ain' no lie, it's mink. I git sight o' this here ruffin onct by lyin' with my belly on th' bank an' my chin on th' aidge o' a rock f'r three hours. I see him swimmin' five feet below an' swimmin' slow. He'd been killin' an' eatin' an' couldn' 'a' swum fas' ef he'd wanted to. I counted th' rings. They was ten o' 'em, th' broades' in th' middle, an' I says to m'se'f, says I: 'Shore, you ain' human!' I ain' never been run out'n no country by no mink yit, howsom-ever, an' I laid f'r him.

"Now, I knows minks f'om 'way up t' 'way down. They has one hole to go in at an' 'nuther hole t' come out at, same's a rabbit. Sometimes they has fo' ur five holes,

an' they ain' no sense in tryin' t' git 'em thataway. Nachully you cain' go inter wattuh f'r 'em an' nacuhllly you cain' fin' 'em walkin' roun' huntin' f'r you so's you kin kill 'em. Like ev'ry yuther an'mul, though, they's got places they likes bes', w'at you call runways. You fin' th' runway an' sets your traps, an' ef th' mink's human you'll git him.

"I been trappin', off'n on, f'r fifteen year, an' mos' times I jus' liever have a blin' trap's a bait trap. A blin' trap is a trap sunk a leetle un'er th' ice ur snow. Minks nur nothin' cain' smell through ice ur snow. Well, I tried both on him. I baited with feesh un'er wattuh an' 'long th' bank; I baited with eel; I baited with mushrat, an' a mink'll jus' lie down an' cry hisse'f sick with joy ef you offer him mushrat. Lyin' out f'om un'er kiver in these here damned



winters lookin' at them traps I ketch lumbiggy an' pneumony an' consumshun an' bronkitty an' neuralagy an' outgrowin' toenails an' a broken heart an' ev'rything this side o' Hudson Bay, 'cep' mink. I wore out six cant-hooks an' forty peavies an' a spade I borrered f'om Knut Knutson's shack, intendin' t' return it some day, diggin' holes f'r blin' traps, an' I don' git no mink. I says to m'se'f, says I: 'You ain' human!'

"Finerly, I says to m'se'f: 'Ef you got more sense 'n w'at I got, I got more strenk 'n w'at you got. You know traps an' you know th' bottom o' th' Flambeau like w'at I know th' trail f'om th' Chip'way res'vation back t' a w'ite man's home,' says I, 'but you don' know dynermite.'

"They were a shack down near th' Big Drive on th' Chip'way River w'ere some

fellers been blastin' in th' summer an' fall. They had went away an' lef' this shack filled with 'bout 'leven hunderd poun' o' dynermite, hopin' it'd be struck by lightnin', I s'pose. Nobody in all that kentry couldn' be hired to go near it. Now, I slep' with dynermite. I made pillers out'n sticks o' it. I druther have it aroun' 'n a fool w'at smokes cig'reets an' blows his breath in your face. Ef I gotter die, I wanter die sudden an' painless an' scattered; so I hikes.

"I hikes sixty mile in five hours, ur mebbe five an' a 'arf hours, an' then I hits th' neighborhood w'ere this shack were. Th' hull pop'lacion o' sixteen, ur mebbe eighteen, souls had skipped, f'r fear o' that dynermite. I foun' th' shack all right an' I broke open th' door with a rock, an' there were th' stuff piled up as high as a man's

breas' in a 20×30 room. I lifted out forty poun' o' it, near 's I could guess, an' packed it in a sack an' flung it over m' shoulder, an' then I hiked back. Gittin' through the woods in th' plumb dark with a bag o' sudden death thumpin' you on th' backbone would sorter make creepy things lodge in mos' men's haid, but it didn' bother me none. Aleck McWhirter, th' lumber telephone, never swunged 'long no more happy an' careless an' fas' 'n w'at I swunged. I git back to these here rapids jus' as day were gittin' ready t' break, an' it don' come in Janwerry tell near 7 o'clock.

“I got out on m' skates an' put th' dynermite catterges jus' un'er th' ice nex' t' th' bank f'r a 'arf mile, leavin' th' fuses stickin' out, as a matter o' co'se. Then I lighted a balsam to'ch an' touched off th' fus' one, an' started back up th' stream. Them fuses

was cut t' burn five seconds each. Th' fus' one lighted went off w'en I were puttin' th' fire to th' las' one. Then I buzzed up th' river an' waited five hundred yard away f'r th' las' kerloombaloom. I ain' claimin' t' be no shore-'nough skater now, but them times I could move a leetle. Polin' boats f'r fellers w'at cain' feesh takes th' speed out 'n a man's laigs.

"Ef you could 'a' lissened to' them sticks a-goin' off you'd 'a' thought they was hell a-poppin' an' not a bucket o' wattuh inside o' forty rod. They tell me it were heerd all ov'r this here part o' th' United States. One time they was eighty ur mebbe ninety duck hunters up f'om Chicarger with 10-gauge puns all shootin' at one mud hen on Long Lake, an' it weren't nothin' t' compare. Nex' mornin', ur I should say w'en th' sun come up, th' Flambeau looked like

some gi'nt done been at it with a pickaxe
w'at would reach f'om here to th' moon.
Th' ice were chawed an' splintered an'
sawed an' heaved tremenjuss. I says to
m'se'f, says I: 'Here's w'ere you kill 'nough
red-eyed bass t' make you mos' as rich as
th' man w'at keeps Henderson's store ef
you could on'y git 'em to Chicarger; but
you shore got that mink,' I says. An' I go
to sleep peaceful.

“'Bout noontime I goes to m' ol' ledge o'
rock an' lays down an' sticks m' chin over,
thinkin' that lookin' through a ice crack I
might fin' as much as a piece o' pelt ur one
yeller ring lef'. There he were, swimmin'
'long, takin' his time 'bout it, quiet as a
French graveyard up in ol' Canady. Didn'
seem disturbed none. You'd 'a' said f'om
th' way he slipped through th' cold wattuh
easier 'n any snake w'at ev'r made a ripple,

as he were used t' bein' blowed up an' reether liked it t' keep him f'om feelin' lonesome. I says to m'se'f: 'You ain' human,' an' I quit him right there."

"Well?" said the other man.

"I happened t' be 'long nex' summ'r an' f'r ol' friendship's sake I thort I'd look him up. W'en anything, man ur burd ur beas', gits th' bes' o' me I may git flighty f'r a w'ile, but arterward I wants t' hunt him up an' tell him he done it fair. So I puts in a day locatin' th' mink. An' I fin' him in th' same wattuh an' I lays by jus' to watch him kill feesh. I see him plain 'nough, th' wattuh then bein' low, lie behin' th' rock. I now got my pole on an' jump out at bass w'at went by him an' nip 'em back o' th' haid an' let 'em drif' down. Ev'ry now an' then he'd bite out a chunk, jus' t' show th' hull tribe they warn't no col'ness, an' begin

agin 'to murder an' t' slay,' like Pete Kernigan's song says.

"I lay quiet f'r th' bes' part o' three day an' were beginnin' t' git tired an' sigh f'r som'p'n' else, w'en I see a bigger riffle 'n ushul comin' down, an' I thinks t' m'se'f they's a big bass un'er it. W'en it got clost t' th' mink I see him plain. It were a bass shore 'nough, an' nothin' like him never swum up an' down th' Flambeau afore nur sence. A feller what I guided f'r one time spoke a piece t' me out'n a book, som'p'n' 'bout a red-eye bass bein', inch f'r inch an' poun' f'r poun', th' games' thing w'at swims, an' I tell you it ain' no lie. I says t' m'se'f: 'Brother Mink, ef you tackle that prop'-sishun, you'll think dynermite ain' nothin' but tooth-powder,' I says, f'r this here feesh mus' 'a' weighed eight poun' as he swimm'd, ur eight an' a 'arf.

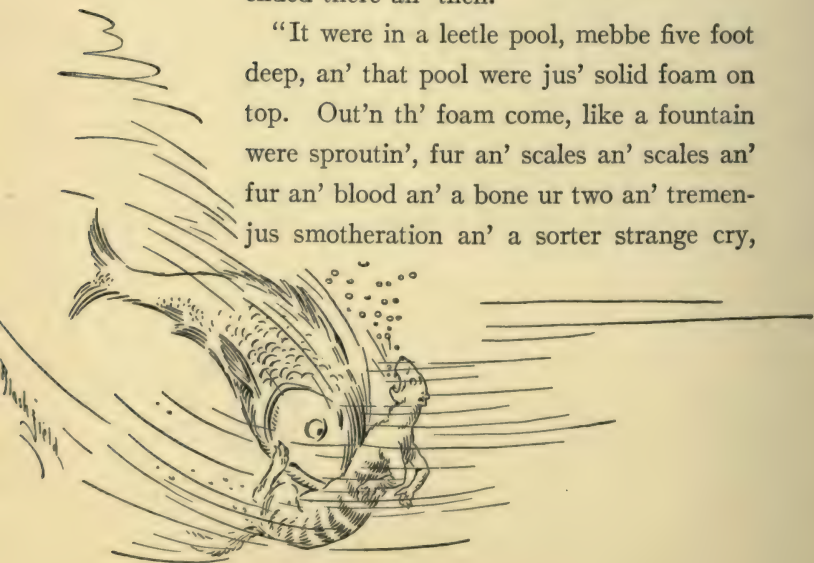
"Shore as leetle apples 'll float, th' mink made his spring as th' bass passed him, but fas' as he were he hit a good two foot behin'. Th' red-eye were fifty foot downstream in less 'n a quarter o' th' time it'd take a man like you to think, an' there he turned an' lay with his haid upstream, his tail wavin' backered an' forrerd, his side fins jus' flutterin' a leetle bit an' his red eye shinin' un'er th' wattuh like a coal. Seemed t' me th' mink felt sorter foolish. Anyhow, he turned his head down, an' bit hisse'f un'er th' lef foreleg t' see ef he were awake ur jus' thinkin' he were awake. Then he started down, careless an' neglectful, like he were talkin' to hisse'f an' sayin' 'My! ain' you easy!'

"'Tain' off'n I try t' hol' m' breath, but I held it then. Three secon's later they was a thing happed a good man orter travel a thousan' mile to see, ur mebbe twelve hun-



dred. Th' mink jumped forrerd expectin' th' bass t' turn an' give him th' tailhold, but, 'stead on that, th' bass met him more'n 'arf way. He met him so hard an' hit him such a biff atween th' forelegs that I could hear it w'ere I was, an' man, I want you to know this was goin' on un'er th' wattuh an' th' wattuh itse'f a makin' a lot o' noise like w'at it allers makes w'en it's shaller on these here rocks. Th' mink were druv back a yard, like I seen a big log hit a straight bank an' jump back, an' then he went forrerd, nose t' nose, like th' thing had t' be ended there an' then.

"It were in a leetle pool, mebbe five foot deep, an' that pool were jus' solid foam on top. Out'n th' foam come, like a fountain were sproutin', fur an' scales an' scales an' fur an' blood an' a bone ur two an' tremenjuss smotheration an' a sorter strange cry,



like a leetle child were los' somew'eres an' couldn't fin' its way home. W'en I turned loose my breath my heart wer' goin' like one o' these pile drivin' things th' plugs on th' railroads works with, an' th' pool stopped swirlin' an' got smooth on top agin. They weren't nothin' lef' f'r me t' do 'cep' t' stay still an' think f'r aw'ile, an' I thinks this:

“‘A man may live in these woods f'r ten thousan' years, an' w'en he gits through he won' see it all, nur a 'arf o' it, nur a quarter an' he won' know nothin' 'cep' he don' know nothin'.’

“I walks down stream f'r a mile an' I see th' feesh floatin' in a eddy. I pulls him to shore an' looks at him. He were scarred an' tore an' cut to th' holler in forty places, but his mouth were full o' fur. I cut him open an' inside o' him were some four poun' o' that mink. Some o' th' yellow stripes was

mixed with th' chawed meat. I says to m'se'f, I says:

“ ‘Ol’ man, you win; ’cause they is some o’ you lef’ as everdunce, but shore they ain’ nothin’ o’ him. Ef so be as any o’ his meat is floatin’ down th’ river, it won’ git a mile afore th’ red-eyes ’ll swaller it, jus’ t’ git even with th’ en’m’y o’ th’ tribe. They’ll swaller it,’ I says, ‘w’ether they’re hungry ur not, an’ I cain’ blame ’em,’ says I, ‘f’r,’ says I, ‘ef so be ’s I were a red-eye an’ a piece o’ that mink come ’long,’ I says, ‘I’d eat it slow an’ turn it roun’ four times in m’ mouth,’ I says.

“I figgered it out thisaway: Th’ red-eyes ’d been eat tell they got tired. They knowed that ef they all tried t’ jump th’ mink to onst he’d git back in his hole an’ larf. So they picked out th’ bigges’ o’ ’em—th’ gran’pa o’ th’ bunch—an’ ’lected him to git hisse’f killed

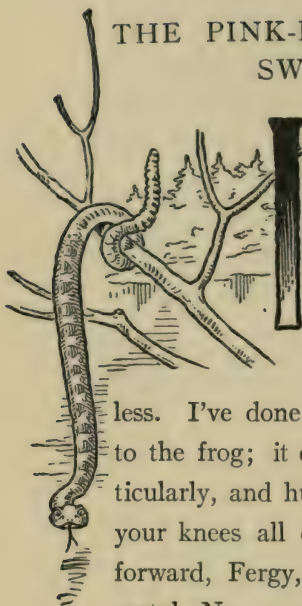
f'r th' good o' th' red-eye peepul. I ain' sayin' but w'at it were playin' it low down on th' gran'pa; but look at th' way he said 'all right,' an' went out an' fought th' fight an' got hisse'f chawed t' he'p th' leetle ones 'long. I says t' m'se'f, says I:

" 'Fergy, ef it ev'r gits up t' you t' do th' same thing, I hopes you'll show yourse'f as much man as this here pore daid feesh,' I says. I ain' w'at th' gals at th' hotel calls sentermentul, but I know w'at's right an' w'at's wronk."

"You buried the body, I suppose," said the other man languidly.

"Well," said Fergy, "no. But I took one o' his scales an' skinned th' membern f'om inside o' it an' made me a shore-nough fly, an' I ketched lots o' red-eyes with that fly."

THE PINK-BELLIED FROG OF SWAMP LAKE



FIND," said the other man, "that I get as many muskies with the bare spoon as with one baited. Many folks go to the trouble of hanging a frog on the hooks, but it's useless. I've done with frog bait. It's cruel to the frog; it doesn't attract the fish particularly, and hugging the bucket between your knees all day is a nuisance. Henceforward, Fergy, we'll stick to the naked metal, No. 9 preferred, and showing the copper tinge on one side."

"It sorter cheers me t' lissen," said the guide, dropping the right oar and scratching

his ear reflectively. "Ef you think I go out in th' mornin' an' ketch frogs to keep in practuss, you got 'nuther think comin'. I don' need no practuss. I c'n git up th' darkes' night w'at ever shined an' grab 'em off w'ere 'nuther man couldn' heer 'em holler. Ef so be's you got inter that frame o' min', I'm willin' t' rest. Trouble is with you amachoor feeshurmun that you know too much an' know it too sudden. A musky'll hit at a naked spoon w'en he's full o' grub jus' t' prove he's boss. He don' wan nothin' like a feesh swimmin' roun' w'ere he is, an' so he jumps out an' starts t' do biznis. Off'n he'll lam it with his nose, keepin' his mouth tight shet, an' then go back to his home at th' ruts o' the lily-pads. Sometimes he comes up slow an' hongry an' ef he don' fin' no meat on th' hooks, he says, says he, 'O, mommer!' an' goes back. Many

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times he's 'arf-starvin' an' ef they's frog to le had he's goin' to have it. It don' do no hurt t' hev th' frog there. Th' spoon spins jus' th' same. It's a leetle trouble t' you t' do th' baitin', but, 's I un'erstan' it, you come up here, inter these here woods, lookin' fur trouble. Some o' these days I'm——"

"All right! All right!" said the other man hastily. "We'll use frogs. I'd scorn to catch fish by having them talked to death."

"Frogs," Fergy continued serenely, "is funny things. They differs. Some o' 'em ain' got no more know-how as a 'arf-Injun Frenchmun full o' Norwejun beer, an' some o' 'em could len' you sense an' never miss it. Frogs in gin'rul is near human. They'll snicker ef you tickle 'em, they'll cry ef you hol' 'em an' hurt 'em bad. They plays jokes on one 'nuther arter dark an' laughs fit to shake they upper tooths out. You c'n

ketch 'em with red flannul tied on a hook, but that's 'cause they has a eye t' beauty. You c'n sneak up behin' 'em w'en they's sunnin' theyse'fs an' slap a han' like a moose-hide down on 'em—at leas' I c'n—but that's 'cause they's trus'ful an' don' mean no harm to nothin'. I think you better not never use no more frogs, f'r it hurts m' heart every time I see you stick one un'er th' chin."

"All right!" said the other man, mechanically, shifting his hold on the handle of the steel rod, which was bent far back by the strain of the water on spoon and line, and glancing at the guide in patient suffering. "All right!"

"They's frogs, an' frogs, an' frogs, an' frogs, howsomever. One time a young nat'ralis' feller come here lookin' f'r mateer-yul out'n w'ich he were goin' t' git rich.

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Offered me \$5 apiece f'r woodcock aigs. I worked a week an' foun' four aigs an' took 'em to him an' says, says I:

“ ‘Money in th' han',’ I says, ‘an' lick in th' glass; here's t' a fine-lookin' man,’ I says, ‘an' a fine-lookin' lass,’ says I.

“ ‘Them's jay-bird aigs,’ says he, an' went inside th' hotel.

“I'd a-got him by his lef' laig an' swung him roun' an' roun' ef he'd a-come out, but he wouldn't come. Anyhow, that give me a ideer they was dolluhs in strange things foun' out in th' woods, so I kep' a lookout. I reezuned this away: They mus' be som'ers a shore-nough nat'ralis' w'at c'n tell woodcock aigs f'om jay-bird aigs, an' he's got money an' he'll buy funny things ef I c'n fin' 'em f'r him. That's th' way I reezuned, an' I kep' m' eyes peeled.

“One mornin' I goes over t' Swamp Lake

t' git frogs f'r bait. I had th' buckit more'n 'arf full an' was figgerin' on a word o' praise an' som'p'n' damp f'om th' man I were with at th' time, w'en, suddint, I heers a big 'H-rumph! H-rumph!' like somebody'd th'owed a crazy bull 'ginst a bass drum twicet. I jumped four feet straight up an' eight foot sideways an' w'en I lit standin' in th' mud that there 'H-rumph! H-rumph!' come agin.

"Then they rose up f'om th' pads thirty yard away a frog like w'at I never seen afore. He were two foot long an' his back were greener'n th' grasses in May. I couldn' see no black specks on him—he were jus' deep green. He went up an' up tell I thought he were flyin', an' then he hit th' wattuh kerblop twenty-five foot away an' went un'er.

"I never see a frog big as that there frog

an' I never see a jump like that jump, but w'at got nex' t' me were that w'en he were at his highes' I seen his belly were a beautiful pink. Th' color were like w'at you see sometimes on th' inside o' a sea-shell. I said t' m'se'f, says I:

“ Here's w'ere I gets rich. I'll take you in,' says I, 'an' nuss you careful an' talk t' you w'en you're lonely, an' feed you on bugs 'n things tell your belly sticks out like a axe helve,' says I, 'an' then I'll sell you t' th' fust damn fool nat'ralis' w'at comes 'long with more money as think-strenk,' I says.

“I went back t' th' camp with w'at frogs I'd ketched an' raised a row with th' feller w'at had me hired an' guided him back to th' hotel an' let him cuss me tell I got m' money an' then I cussed him, an' then I were free f'r aw'ile.

"Campin' on Swamp Lake ain' no fun, but that's w'at I done. I knowed in reezun I wouldn' have no trouble findin' th' frog agin, 'cause they're clost t' humans an' likes to hang roun' a place w'at they're used to. I got me a dip-net at th' hotel an' I fitted a cane pole to it thirty-one foot eight an' a 'arf inch long. I calkerlated t' place him by his v'ice, sneak up f'om behin', clap th' net down on him an' work my way t' him, pressin' down hard on th' pole all th' time.

"You never heerd no frog songs like I heerd them nights at Swamp Lake. Forty millyun billyun frogs was tryin' t' outdo one 'nuther. Seemed t' me my haid 'd bust. I helt it with m' han's an' cussed—I don' like to have no haid 'less 'n I done som'p'n' t' get it—an' wushed f'r daylight. 'Long 'bout 2 o'clock on th' fust night I heerd a v'ice w'at I knowed to onct—deep, stronk,

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roun', melojus. 'Jug-o'-rum! Jug-o'-rum! Jug-o'-rum!' says he; 'Knee-deep! Knee-deep! Knee-deep!' he says; 'Knee-deep an' deeper! Knee-deep an' deeper! Deeper, jug-o'-rum! Deeper, jug-o'-rum! More rain! More rain! Knee-deep an' more rain, jug-o'-rum!' An' I says t' m'se'f, says I: 'Dad-ding you! I'll git some o' you in' th' mornin',' I says, 'ur jam th' logs,' I says, an', smilin' t' m'se'f like a leetle child w'at's had par'goric, I goes t' sleep. I had it all figgered out an' I could see that pink-bellied scoundril strugglin' in th' net an' me pullin' down \$22 f'r him.

"Nex' mornin' arter sun-up I puts on a pa'r o' ol' shoes an' takes th' dip-net an' starts out slow, feelin' m' way every step. I didn' make no more noise as a tadpole slippin' through th' lake. Bimeby, w'en I git t' th' right part o' th' wattuh, I stop still

an' lissen. I stop still an' lissen a long time. Then I heer this feller talkin' to hisself some'ers over in th' pads. It were 10 o'clock by then an' th' sun were up, hot.

" 'My! my!' he says, says he, sorter whisperin' an' gruntin' mixed. 'This is w'at I calls lux'ry,' he says. 'All m' wives on th' yuther side o' th' lake an' th' childun soun' asleep on th' bank an' me on a good sof' pad,' he says, 'a-stretchin' m'se'f an' gittin' m' pore ol' blood het up,' he says. 'I won'er,' he says, 'w'at a ol' fool like I be wants o' mor'n thirty wives, anyhow,' says he; 'sorter wearies m' min' keepin' count o' 'em,' he says; 'an' as f'r th' childun,' he says, 'they're 'nough t' make a man crazier 'n a sucker with a pine needle in his gills. They cain't sing an' they won' work. But I cain't blame 'em,' he says, sorter reflective an' snorey. 'I wouldn' work neither ef I

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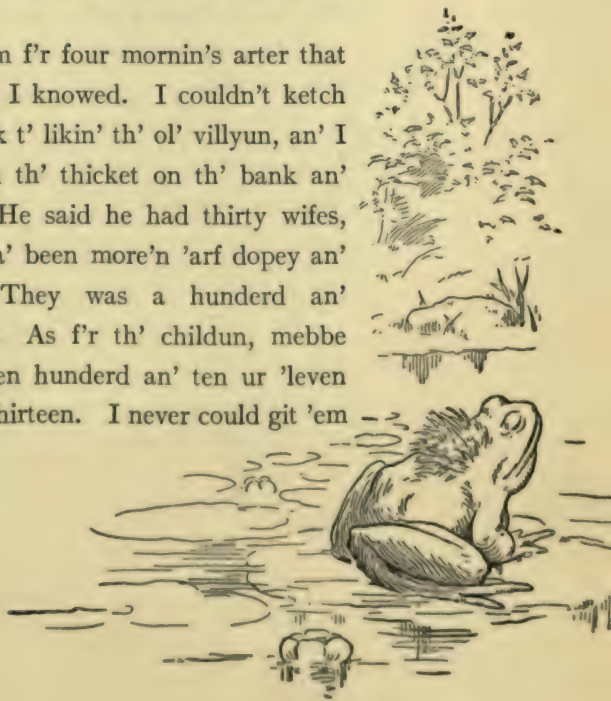
didn' hev to,' says he, 'an', anyhow, this is m' day off. H-r-r-rumph!'

"I slided eight steps forrerd an' peeked roun' 'mong th' pads an' I see him sittin' fifteen foot 'way, with his back t' me. Say, th' longer a frog lives th' bigger he gits, an' this feller mus' a been forty year ol'. Settin' there humped up, with his thighs un'er his chin an' his eyes 'arf shet, he looked same as a cat. His back were smooth as marble an' it shined like a big chunk o' green glass w'at Tim Kerrigan, Hennessy's prescripshun clerk, wears in his flannel shirt behin' th' counter up to Fifiel', but jus' at th' base o' his neck they were a little tuft o' moss growin', an' dark moss at that. Frogs don' git no moss on 'em tell they pass twenty-five.

"I slipped th' net forrerd tell it rested two foot 'bove him an' seven inch behin' him,

an then I swooshed her down. I never made no better swoosh. I ketched a big lily-pad, an' that were all. Th' frog jus' riz up in th' air th' minit I started to swoosh an' went away like he had wings. He split th' wattuh like a knife would 'a' split it, an' didn' leave hardly a ring. Then he stuck his nose up fifty yard away an' says: 'Seems like I cain't git no sleep now'eres,' an' went down agin.

"I tried him f'r four mornin's arter that an' I tried all I knowed. I couldn't ketch him an' I took t' likin' th' ol' villyun, an' I useter hide in th' thicket on th' bank an' watch him. He said he had thirty wives, but he mus' 'a' been more'n 'arf dopey an' miscounted. They was a hunderd an' thirty o' 'em. As f'r th' childun, mebbe they was 'leven hunderd an' ten ur 'leven hunderd an' thirteen. I never could git 'em



to set still long 'nough to be added up ack'ritt. Th' hull fam'ly lived roun' there and sometimes they'd all come on th' bank t'gether an' sun theyse'fs.

"Arter I'd been there a week I notioned they didn't all come t' roll-call. Then I see they was disappearin' fas' an' th' ol' man were troubled in his min'. I looked roun' f'r th' cause an' I foun' it in a big rattler w'at lived 'bout a hunderd an' twenty yard f'om the wattuh's aidge on th' side o' a hill w'ere it were rocky. I follered this feller's trail—it were plain 'nough he'd come t' th' lake so of'en—an' it run from his hole in th' hill t' a big flat rock near th' lake. This rock were two foot high f'om th' groun' an' more leveler as one o' Hennessy's billyud tables, an' it were near square, 'bout two rod to' th' side—a mighty big rock.

"Th' rattler lay on this rock, with his haid

hangin' over th' aidge w'at were within a foot o' th' wattuh, an' waited f'r one o' th' leetle frogs t' come 'long. Then he'd shoot his neck out an' snatch it back quicker 'n a wink, an' swaller slow, an' sorter wriggle hisse'f 'long th' stone, an' wink his lef' eye an' stretch his haid over agin. He'd got fat on frog by th' time I foun' him, an' his markin's was black as Ninette Salge's hair an' his scales was like jools. He were big roun' as a ten-foot maple saplin' at th' butt, an' mebbe two yard long. I lay by an' kep' a eye on him f'r three days, an' I see he were gittin' so much t' eat he moved slow an' cumbers like, an' he slep' through mos' o' th' warm hours. His feedin' time were afore 9 o'clock in th' forenoon an' torrerd sun-down.

"One mornin' th' Pink Bellied Popper come foolin' 'long, drivin' a 'arf-dozen o' his

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kids in front o' him. They hopped ahead, happy an' gay, w'ile he took his time, jus' gruntin' to 'em now an' then. W'en they got t' th' rock th' rattler's haid darted down an' they was one frog less in th' worl'. The ol' man give a deep grunt an' th' leetle fellers turned an' made f'r him fas' as they laigs could carry 'em. He ordered of 'em back inter th' pads w'ere they come f'om. Then he started torrerd th' rock hisse'f.

"He went a-pu'pose inside o' a foot o' it. Th' snake's haid shot down an' its nose went inter th' mud. Th' pink-bellied frog weren't there. He come swimmin' back in a minit, grumblin' to hisse'f, clomb out on th' bank, an' set down 'bout a yard f'om th' rock.

"Th' rattler kwiled until he made a ringed pile a foot high an' out'n this pile his haid stuck up an' begin t' wave f'om side t' side.

His th' oat swelled tell it were near as big 's his body an' his eyes was like red-hot coals. Faster an' faster his haid went an' his eyes got redder an' redder. I reelized then as he were tryin' t' chawm th' frog. I heerd o' this bein' did, but I never see it afore. That snake's haid in a leetle w'ile were goin' backerd an' forrerd faster as any shuttle you ever see—made me 'mos' dizzy t' look at him—an' his eyes seemed like two long narrow slits o' fire. You've seed a leetle boy w'irl a burnin' stick roun' in th' dark an' make it a ring o' fire? Well, that's w'at th' rattler did, on'y they weren't no ring—jus' a streak o' light 'bout six inches long an' thin 's a lead pensul.

“Suddint he stopped an' stared hard at th' frog. Th' frog hadn' moved a inch an' jus' set there an' looked back, wonderin' w'at in Hel'n M'riar all th' monkey biznis were

'bout. His eyes was black an' sof' an' had a sorter inquirin' gaze, like he didn' care much, but could stan' tellin' if so be's th' snake had any information t' sling loose. Then he w'ispered 'Ur-rumph!' an' jumped inter th' lake. I see him climb on a lily-pad a yard acrost an' growin' ten rod out f'om th' shore.

"He set there all day an' singt, sometimes loud an' sometimes easy, an' a man could tell w'at he were sayin' jus' like it were United States.

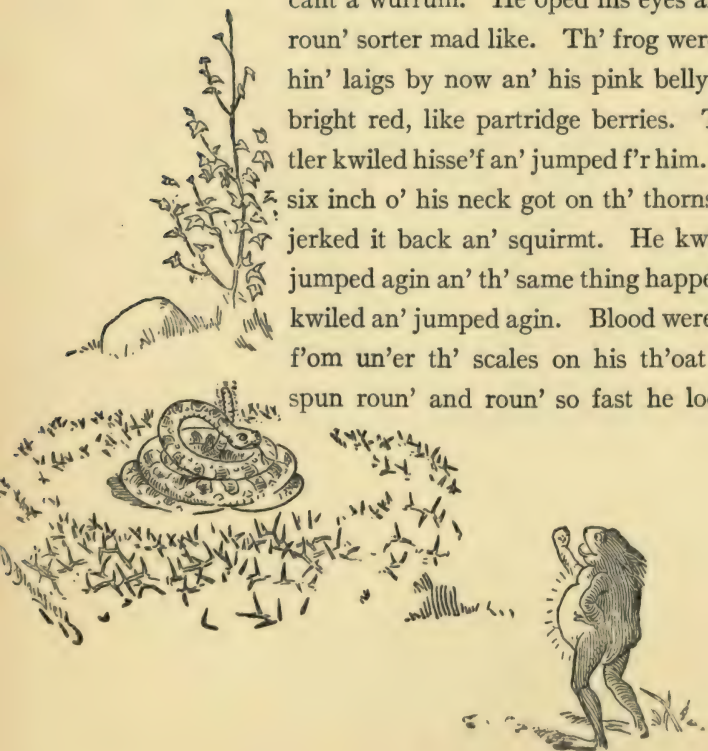
"'You've et m' childun, dodgast you!' says he. 'It's true I had a lot more 'n I knowed w'at t' do with, but they wasn't yourn. You've et m' childun an' got fat on 'em!' he says. 'You've came down t' m' lake an' laid on m' rock an' never said nothin' to nobody! Worse 'n that,' says he, 'you've tried t' chawm an' eat me—me!

Dadbing your imperdence!' he says. 'Wait tell to-morrer,' he says, 'an' I'll make you wush you were a blin' turtle with both front flippers gone, 'stead o' a rattler!' he says.

"Nex' day at noon th' rattler were soun' 'sleep on th' rock. He'd et fifteen leetle frogs an' were feelin' like he'd airnt a right t' snooze. I heerd a rustlin' in th' undergrowth an' here come th' ol' man with a bit o' thorny twig in his mouth. He laid th' twig down on th' rock 'bout six foot f'om th' rattler, easier 'n a feather droppin'. Behin' him in leetle hops, not more'n a inch high an' two inches long, come every wife an' child he had, each o' 'em with a bit o' thorn—hundreds o' 'em. They laid down th' thorns in a ring 'bout th' rattler an' went back f'r more. My! how them frogs worked! In a hour they had a belt o' thorns 'bout that snake five foot wide an'

two inches deep. It were jus' a thick carpet laid in a succle. Every thorn p'int stuck straight up. Then they sashayed t' th' lake an' th' ol' man hopped onter th' rock outside th' ring an' yelled, so's you could 'a' heerd him over in Langlade County: 'Wake up! You thievin', murderin', measly wur-rum, wake up!'

"They ain' no rattler likes t' heer hisse'f callt a wurrum. He oped his eyes an' lookt roun' sorter mad like. Th' frog were on his hin' laigs by now an' his pink belly were a bright red, like partridge berries. Th' rattler kwiled hisse'f an' jumped f'r him. 'Bout six inch o' his neck got on th' thorns an' he jerked it back an' squirmt. He kwiled an' jumped agin an' th' same thing happed. He kwiled an' jumped agin. Blood were comin' f'om un'er th' scales on his th'oat an' he spun roun' and roun' so fast he lookt like



they was twenty-three snakes, all goin' to onct.

"He started to crawl o'er th' thorn-ring an' he couldn' make it. He'd run roun' swif' an' stick his haid far over an' sorter let it down on th' thorns easy an' then snatch it 'way f'om 'em an' git mad some more. All th' time th' frog's belly were git-tin redder an' redder an' he kep' talkin':

"'Go it, ol' frog-eater! Go it, ol' frog-swallerer! Try it over agin, Mr. Good Jumper! Take 'nuther try at her, Mr. Wise Man! Jus' lay down on them thorns an' waller in 'em, Mr. Good Thing! Whoop-her-up! Whoop-her-up! Whoop-her-up! Mr. Wurrum!'

"At las' th' rattler went crazy. He kwiled high an' socked his fangs inter hisse'f six times. A minit arterward he straightened out an' funny leetle shivers run all up 'n

down un'er his skin. Then he didn' move no more. I started t' him an' th' ol' man, his belly turnin' t' pink agin in a secon', made a spring o' eighteen feet in th' clear, landed in th' wattuh atween two pads, an' that's th' las' I see o' him. I went 'way an' lef' th' snake layin' there. I come back by that away nex' year. His skel'tun were still on th' rock an' th' ring o' thorns was roun' it. They'd rotted an' los' they p'int, but th' broad belt o' em' were plain t' see."

"I believe," said the other man, reeling in and looking at his spoon, "I believe I'll try a frog."

"Shore!" said Fergy, cordially, shoving the bucket toward him with the toe of his shoe. "Them's on'y brown ones. They ain' nothin' in 'em 'cep' noise."

THE LIFE PASSION OF THE SILVER FOX



ROWING didactic under the influence of a glass of mellow Scotch and a five-inch Havana given to him by the other man, Fergy elevated a knotted forefinger impressively and said:

“Lissen: You cain’t know men tell you studies ’em. Likewise, you cain’t know an’-muls tell you studies ’em. All men has they funnyfuns; knowed one onct t’ claim he were a bald eagle an’ try t’ fly out’n th’ back winder o’ Hennessy’s drug-store. All an’-muls has they funnyfuns; knowed a chipmunk t’ drown hisse’f in Big Price Lake ’cause a lady porkypine had ’leven childun in a heap. This here chipmunk didn’ have

nothin' t' do with them there childun, un'-
erstan; jus' drowned hisse'f 'cause they
happed. It looked t' me like it were up t'
Ol' Man Porky t' stick his nose in th' mud
till his hind toes was hid, but th' 'munk
couldn' see it thataway.

"One winter, w'en they wasn't nothin'
doin' in Fifiel', an' folks begin t' arsk me
how long I could hol' out 'fore I went t'
suckin' stumps f'r t' nutrify myse'f, with
snowballs f'r deesert, a feller come 'long,
name Hudson, from down Mississip way.
He tells me mink there is thicker'n harf-
crazy whole Frenchmun in Canady, an' I
c'n git traps jus' by arskin' f'r 'em. I
straps on my pack an' my snow-shoes an'
slides f'r th' mouth o' th' Chippewa'. I hit
it a mile an' two hunderd yards 'bove where
it empties into th' Mississip an' I sorter
know from th' way things looked I were

goin' t' ketch mink till I'd be 'shamed t' look one in th' face. Ev'rything come my way f'r onct. I git all th' traps I c'n portage 'crost a dry trail a foot wide; I git grub on credick; they tell me as any man w'at knows Hudson knows them, an' any man w'at knows them don' have to spen' no money f'r nothin'. That suits me. I git all ready t' start up th' river to good mink-groun' 'bout dark. I'm swingin' down th' street w'en I pass a dance-shack run by Phanor Grostête—that means 'Big Head,' but his head weren't no bigger'n a bait-can. I look up th' banks o' th' river. Th' wattuh were froze solid acrost an' th' way were lonely an' col'. I hear th' soun' o' a fiddle comin' out over th' snow an' I hear th' feet o' th' folks inside shufflin'. Anybody c'n take a fiddle an' make me lay down my life f'r him 'fore he puts th' rosin on th' bow,

an' w'en I hear feet goin' mine has jus' got t' go th' same way. No use tryin' t' explain it; I were born thataway; I tol' you every man hed his funnyfuns. I says t' myse'f, says I: 'Mr. Ferguson, they ain' no hurry 'bout this mink biznis. Th' mink don' know you're comin'. They'll be there day after to-morrer, jus' like they'll be there to-morrer. They tell me how folks in th' big cities kills theyse'fs by hurryin'. You ain' got but \$5 in th' worl'—an' you borrowed that on Hudson's name—an' w'at you're goin' t' do is t' look on a w'ile an' keep one han' in th' pocket w'ere that money is at,' says I.

"I dumped my pack an' traps inside th' door. At th' fur eend o' th' room were a club-footed fiddler an' th' strings un'er his fingers was singin' like a clover-fiel' full o' bees in th' summer-time up Keebeck way.

Th' blackes'-eyed an' whites'-skinned an' redde'-cheeked an' plumpes' gal w'at ev'r made a man f'git home an' mother fluttered up t' me an' says: 'Dancez!' says she, an' you bet I went out into th' middle an' showed 'em w'at it meant t' come from th' St. Lawrence country w'ere th' air is good. I wern't more'n twenty-five them days—jus' a boy with fire in my laigs an' b'loon air in my haid—an' 'fore I got through they was willin' to flock roun' me an' give me harf they had—but they didn' have nothin'. I notice this gal, Manette Lecompte her name were, kep' one black eye on th' fiddler, an' w'en I buy drinks she makes pretence t' drink hers, but she manidges t' slip more'n much o' it t' him. I didn' like this no more'n a musky likes a wall-eye pike foolin' roun', but nat'rally I couldn' say nothin' t' a cripple man. Bimeby I begin t' think as

how mebbe I'm mistook anyhow, an' then I has more fun. 'Bout daylight, w'en that \$5 is went into th' air like a pussy-willer bloom w'en th' win' hits i, I gits Manette into a corner an' arsk her t' marry me. She larfs fit t' hurt herse'f an' screams it t' all th' res' o' 'em, an' th' fiddler grins an' says, says he: 'Ah go' play you 'noth' mu-seek, now! Ah mek eet to mahse'f. Eet name "Dam Fool Trapper, W'ere Yo' Mon' All Went?" he says.

"They yelled agin, but 'fore th' bow touched th' gut I'd stretched two o' 'em an' were out in th' road, pack, traps, an' all, and hikin' due north 'long th' river. I heerd a feller onct talkin' 'bout 'nother feller name Rob Crusoe, ur some such, an' I says t' myse'f, says I: 'Sence that gal don' seem t' know 'nough t' know a shore-'nough Canuck w'en she sees one,' I says, 'I'll go

into th' woods an' be a wil' man,' says I. In my pack was bacon, flour, a fryin'-pan, matches, blankits, an' a two-gallon jug o' alkyhol. I were fixed. Lissen: You don' never want t' f'git 'bout alkyhol. A two-gallon jug o' it is a four-gallon jug o' w'isky, ef you want t' mix it with wattuh harf an' harf, an' ef you don' want t' mix it a harf drink o' it is a whole drink o' whisky. So far's my say goes, it's too much trouble t' mix it. I foun' a sandy cave in th' side o' a bluff 'fore daylight, thirty-eight mile 'bove th' Chippewa' an' lay down an' slep' like a infunt.

"Say, jevver see th' upp'r Mississip country? Wisconsin side an' Minnesoty side, bluffs rear up five hunderd foot high an' atween 'em th' river twists. In spring them bluffs is green to th' tops an' all summer through they're good f'r sore eyes t' res' on;

in th' fall, w'en th' fros' has fell, they're a millyun an' a harf o' colors, but in th' winter, w'en th' trees is bare an' th' stream jus' a glare o' ice, they're lonesome 'nough t' make a hellygoright [helgramite] c'mit soo'cide. Th' win' howls roun' 'em like a dog-wolf caught bitter by all four laigs in a snap-trap, an' ef you set your licker out at night you gotter break off a chunk o' it nex' mornin' with your shoe-heel. They got railroads runnin' 'long th' bottom o' them bluffs these days, but w'en I fus' hit 'em nothin' runned 'long there 'cep' shivers. I woke up an' I looked out'n th' hole at th' mouth o' my Rob Crusoe cave an' I says t' myse'f, says I, 'I'd give th' five dollars w'at Hudson owed f'r ef I could be back in Fifiel' w'ere peepul might jaw me a leetle, but I could allers fin' somebody t' whup. I considered o' m'se'f that ef they weren't no

minks ketched roun' there till I ketched 'em they'd git so spruce-gum thick th' steam-boats couldn' run f'r 'em. Then I played a leetle chune on th' jug an' et some bacon an' crackers an' played 'nother chune an' looked out ag'in. Atween me an' th' solid ice w'at useter be th' river were a line o' low hills. They wasn't more'n ten foot high an' I knowed in a minit they was Injun hills—hills w'at th' fool red-folk useter bury one 'nother in. Onct they were a purfesser from som collidge in Canady hangin' 'bout a lumber-camp w'ere I were an' he cried f'r happiness w'en one o' th' boys give him a ol' arrer-haid, an' he dug into hisse'f an' feeshed out a lot o' money f'r it. I says t' myse'f, w'en I see them Injun hills, I don' have t' fool roun' none with mink. I says t' myse'f, I'll tap 'em an' git out a lot o' beads an' pipes an' wampum an' useless

truck like that an sell it t' th' fus' purfesser I c'n ketch an' tie t' a tree. I laid off t' do it that day, but somehow ur 'nother, w'at with makin' a fire t' keep th' jug warm an' makin' th' jug lighter t' keep myse'f warm I clean f'got it till after dark. By then I were ready t' git a hump on me bigger'n I seen onct on a camel in a cirkis. They weren't no moon, but I lighted a torch an' holdin' th' torch in one hand, th' jug in th' yuther, an' my knife atwix' my teeth, I started t' clamber down t' th' mounds. I took th' knife 'long t' dig with, un'erstan'? I didn' have no spade. I got to' th' fus' mound all right, took a swig, set th' jug down, stuck th' torch in th' fork o' a leetle tree w'at had growed sence th' mound were built an' went t' work.

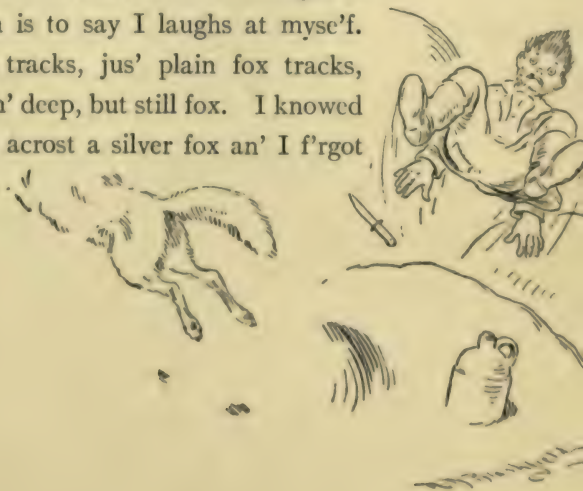
"Lemme tell you: I ain' 'fraid o' no live Injun w'at ever got \$1500 from th' gov'-

ment f'r his lan', bought three kerridges an' six cuckoo clocks with it an' swapped 'em off two hours arterward f'r a kaig o' gin an' a permit from th' store-keeper t' walk home. I fought 'em on ev'ry res'vation in this part o' th' worl', an' I tell you w'en you stack 'em ag'inst a w'ite man w'at earns his livin' snatchin' logs they ain' a patchin' f'r a squirr'l bullit. But a live Injun ain' a daid Injun, an' w'en I started t' dig into that grave an' th' win' come w'istlin' roun' me an' th' col' grabbed holt o' th' marrer in my backbone an' made me feel like I been stuffin' myse'f with icerkuls, th' ha'r sorter raised up on my haid, an' I tilted th' jug jus' t' show myse'f I were still t' th' front. I dig 'way an' I git down with my knife mebbe a foot, mebbe a foot six inches, w'en they come from somers close t' my right th' mos' unyearthly soun' w'atever

made a pore man git down on his hunkers an' pray t' th' good Lord. It were a mixer o' snarl, yelp, scream, howl, an' grunt, with a smidgin' o' whoop in it. I jumped eight foot nine inches straight up an' lit spraddled. I were on my feet in a secon'. Then a big white som'p'n' ten yard away went up jus' like I did, an' w'ile it went up that n'ise continered. Near as I could jedge it put sixteen foot three inches atween it an' th' yearth, an' w'en it come down it disappeared over th' snow like a long streak o' steel. It were jus' a flash an' that were all. I weren't much more'n a flash m'sef' gittin' back t' th' cave. I laid clost all night, an' ef you'd been standin' by th' hole w'ere I went in at you'd 'a' heerd th' bes' imertation o' th' bones-rattler in a nigger-minstul show you ever heerd in your life. That were my teeth goin'. Afore th' sun come up I tol'

m'se'f they weren't nothin' in th' worl' would tempt me within ten yard o' them Injun hills agin, but arter th' sun come up things looked sorter cheery an' I had a feelin' o' goneness I weren't slow to reckernize, havin' had, as I might say, some experunce. Not t' put too fine a p'int on it, I needed that jug, an' I needed it like a cirkit-rider needs chicken. They ain' nothin' I knows of 'll keep a man from licker 'cep' death, an' I weren't daid.

"I got down t' th' mounds fas' an' three minits arter I got there I were wuth a harf-dozen skeered peepul. I looked roun' an' there were th' trail o' th' thing w'at had give me th' jimjams. Soon's I see it I laughs t' myse'f, w'ich is to say I laughs at myse'f. It were fox tracks, jus' plain fox tracks, wide apart an' deep, but still fox. I knowed then I'd run acrost a silver fox an' I f'rgot

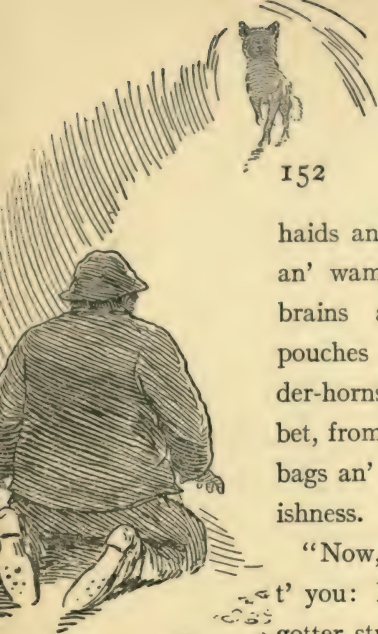


all 'bout minks an' arrer-haids an' things like that. I says t' myse'f there's \$600 wuth o' skin on that fox an' th' money's as good as mine. I go back t' th' cave an' git my traps in order an' lay roun' all day thinkin' 'bout th' good time I'm goin' t' have. That night 'bout dark I sets six traps roun' th' top o' th' moun' an' goes t' bed. Nex' day they ain' no fox ketched an' no fresh tracks. I knowed in reezun his burrer mus' be roun' there somers, an' I change th' trap places a leetle bit. I don' git nothin' by that, 'cep' a burnin' heart. This sort o' thing keeps up f'r a week. Still I'm settin' traps an' changin' 'em an' still there's th' same one trail leadin' 'way from th' moun'. I'd ketched a-many foxes an' I never knowed nothin' like that to hap afore. Foxes has they homes jus' like other peepul, an' w'en let alone they comes back to 'em. Finerly,

givin' th' hull thing up as a bad job an' bein' detarmined t' git som'p'n' out'n th' blame biznis, I wait a w'ile on th' eighth night, an' no fox showin' up, I go t' diggin' agin. By hemlock! The same thing haps. Here's this white thing lettin' out th' same derned n'ise an' makin' th' same flittin'. In th' mornin' I start t' diggin' in earnest. I git down t' th' bottom o' the moun' in a leetle w'ile an' w'en I tap th' grave part o' it they ain' nothin' in it. It's been robbed clean as a w'istle. I notice a passage leadin' from it an' I thinks it runs t' th' nex' grave, so I digs into that. Same thing—not a arrer-haid lef', an' a leetle passage leadin' from one side o' it. I dig inter thirteen graves in thisaway an' I find 'em all empty. Then I come t' th' fourteenth moun'. W'en I reach th' grave I fin' th' body o' a squaw w'at's been daid mebbe a

hunderd an' fifty year. Some ol' chief had buried 'bout forty pound o' beads with her, but they was harf gone. They were a burrer leadin' from this grave northwes' an' I dig down from th' surface an' foller it 'long. It stops at th' foot o' a daid mapul w'at stood on th' side o' a forty-foot bluff overlookin' th' ice. I'm puzzled, but I clim' th' tree an' w'en I git near it's top I fin' a hole. Roun' th' aidge o' this hole is w'ite hairs, showin' w'ere some an'muls been comin' in an' goin' out, an' on th' side o' th' tree nex' t' th' river th' bark is wored deep by claws. I dropped a rock in th' holler an' I hear it go clear to th' bottom. I know then as how th' tree is holler all th' way down an' that th' hole at its root c'nnects with th' las' one o' th' moun's. I seen some fox-burrers in my time, but never one w'at run through fourteen Injun hills

into a holler tree an outer th' holler tree into th' wide worl'. Leadin' 'way from th' base o' th' tree is a plain 'nough trail w'at runs down t' th' river ice. I c'n see it marked plain on th' ice itse'f an' I starts 'long it. It runs out t' th' middle o' th' river, then up-stream f'r a mile an' a harf, an' then 'crost t' th' Minnesoty shore. I strike that shore an' go 'long th' bluffs f'r two hunderd an' twenty-two yard, then up 'em f'r fifty feet. There I run into a cave-mouth, as I expec'. I look in an' Mr. Fox ain' t' home. I knowed he had a-heard me comin' an' had skipped, but I wanted to have a look anyhow, so in I goes. The hole were big 'nough to pass two such men as I be. Inside were a room 'bout twelve foot square with a ceilin' six foot high, an' may I never tas'e ven'son agin ef it warn't more'n harf full o' Injun relicts. They was arrer-



hairs an' beads an' old rotted mockersuns
 an' wampum an' deer-hides tanned with
 brains an' tobacker-pipes an' tobacker-
 pouches made out'n fish-bladders an' pow-
 der-horns an' brass buttons cut, you c'n
 bet, from th' coats o' killed sojers an' arrer-
 bags an' a raft o' that sort o' no-count fool-
 ishness.

"Now, I says t' myse'f w'at I been sayin'
 t' you: Ef you want t' know an'muls you
 gotter study 'em an' ev'ry an'mul's got his
 funnyfun. W'at's th' mattuh o' this here
 fox? He's a bigger fool 'n th' ol' purfessor
 w'at cried 'bout th' arrer-haid. He's a
 Injun relict-hunter; that's w'at he is. It
 shore ain' no use t' try t' ketch him with
 no or'nary bait. T' trap a man ur an'mul
 you gotter use som'p'n' w'at he's crazy
 'bout. W'iles I'm standin' in there talkin'
 t' m'se'f I hear a rustle an', lookin' roun',



see th' fox 'bout t' come into th' cave. He cain' see me 'cause it's dark inside, but he scents some trouble an' halts still. I got him square a'tween me an' th' light an' I see ev'ry hair on him. From ears t' tail he's th' mos' purties' silver you ever see. Three foot high at th' shoulder he stan's, an' he glistens like frost. He's a dog-fox all right an' his eyes is deep brown. His ears is cocked forrerd 'cause he's lissenin' hard, an' one forepaw is raised. I look at this paw clost an' I see it's got six toes on it. Then I give a leetle cough an' he's gone—so silent an' so fas' he sort o' melted.

“I start back t' my cave immejit an' I'm in a hurry. I c'n hear th' air closin' up behin' me. They's one thing dinnin' in my haid over an' over an' over: 'A silver fox-skin wuth \$1200; \$1200 f'r a silver fox-



skin.' I ain' avereecious. I don' wanter be rich. Ef I c'n ever git so's I own two pair o' pants t' onst an' suspenders on both, I'll quit work. But \$1200 f'r one skin 's 'nough t' make a man dizzy t' think on. I jump into th' squaw grave an' I close up th' eend torrerd th' tree so's my fr'en' cain' git in thataway. I close up th' burrer leadin' from it t' th' other graves. I take out a handful o' beads, a pair o' shell earrings, one mockersun, a strip o' deerskin petticoat, an' a hunk o' chewin' tobacker w'at had been buried with th' dear ol' gal an' I put rocks over th' hole. I grab a trap an' hike back near t' th' relict-cave. I sink this trap on a level with th' frozen groun' an' I don' even take th' pains to bresh 'way th' dirt. I done studied my an'mul an' I know I got him w'ere th' feesh-eagle had th' croppie. I tie th' squaw fixin's t' th' trap, go off fifty

yard an' lie down an' watch. In a hour th' silver fox come trottin' long. He stopped in th' middle o' th' trail an' he see th' things lyin' inside o' easy reach. He grinned so's I thort he'd split hisse'f clean back t' his shoulders. Then he jumped forrerd like a buck in th' fall. Th' trap clicked an' that ended it. I s'pose he mus' 'a' been a hunderd an' fifty year ol'. Mebbe he were a fr'en' t' th' ol' Winnebagoes w'at was buried in th' moun's. I dunno. Anyhow, I had him. I killed him in five seconds, an' I git f'r that skin \$1173, arter payin' th' fur-man f'r handlin' it in Chicarger."

"What did you do with the money, Fergy?" the other man asked curiously.

"What'd I do with it? What would any livin' w'ite man do with it? I went back t' Phanor's shack an' danced all night.

'Bout sunup I give th' bundle t' Manette
t' keep, t' show her I had trus' in her. Then
I went roun' th' town t' see ef I could fin'
Hudson, an' w'en I come back her an' th'
club-foot fiddler was gone."

THE QUAIL OF THE FAN HILLS JAG



T the noon hour on Lower Price Lake the other man, having taken three muskallonges of six pounds each, and feeling himself at peace with the world, extracted a half-pint flask from one of the many pockets in his fishing-coat, poured out a fair allowance and tendered it to Fergy the guide.

“Naw,” was the response, with a strong shake of the head; “I knows m’ limit. I had some drinks six months ago. W’en th’ feeshin’ season’s over an’ jus’ before th’ loggin’ season begins, I’ll go inter Fifiel’ an’ make them barkeeps think Ol’ Man Biznis is got back to town. Right now I’m stump suckin’.”

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"All right," said the other man, having tilted the cup slowly and wiped his mustache. "In these matters every chap must be his own lawyer. If you can't take a drink without sandbagging your enormous intelligence, let it alone."

"Yass," Fergy said, "an' ef you cain't talk 'ithout makin' a temp'runce lect'rer o' yourse'f you better buy two poun' o' chewin'-gum, melt it, pour it down you, an' let it set. One time I were over in th' country they call the Fan Hills, a hunderd miles wes' o' here. It's a speckled-trout country an' a man built a log house over there an' called it a hotel. He had four rooms an' a fireplace an' pine beds an' a lot o' ol' deer-horns stuck up aroun', an' city fellers useter come there an' pay him \$15 a week so's they could sit in th' big room an' freeze they backs an' look at the horns. Ef they wanted anythin' to

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eat they went out an' ketched it, an' ef they didn't ketch it they got fried ham an' soggy pertaters twenty-one times in seven days.

"Guidin' were purty good an' I staid all th' summer. In Augus' a chap blowed in with a liv'ry waggin all to hisse'f. It were a big waggin an' he needed it. They was th' driver an' him an' jus' boxes. I thinks to myse'f, 'Here's a shore good feller to git inter th' woods with, f'r he's got things to eat f'om alfybet to izzard.' He hops down f'om th' waggin-seat an' he says: 'Is Fergy th' guide here?' says he, an' I says: 'I be.' He says: 'I heerd o' you a many times,' says he. 'They tells me,' says he, 'that you're a good, careful, sober, truthful man,' he says, an' I say: 'I be.' He says, 'I need you f'r thirty days,' he says. 'We wanter git out inter th' woods right away,' says he. 'Jus' pick out a camp an' take my things to

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it an' you'll have the happies' mont' o' your life,' says he.

"I looked at th' boxes an' I smiles an' I hires th' waggin' an' drives it down on Peach Crick, twenty-four mile eight hunderd an' thirty yard f'om th' Fried Ham House. This feller he broke open his boxes that night an' I stood 'roun' waitin' to stick a tooth inter som'p'n' wuth rememberin'. Well, sir, he had butterfly nets an' nets weaved like spider-webs an' pasteboard cases with glue in 'em an' books with funny names an' th' Jim Hill knows w'at he didn' have, 'cep' som'p'n' to eat. I says to him: 'How do you cook them slashin's?' an' he says, says he: 'Them ain't to cook, them's to use,' he says. 'To use f'r w'at?' says I, an' he says: 'To ketch spec'mens. I'm a nat'ralist,' he says. 'W'at'd you bring f'om th' hotel?' an' I says: 'Ham an' pertaters an' coffee,'

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an' he says: 'That's food mos' too good f'r angils,' says he. Damn him!

"He were a pale feller, with his breas' sunk in. He had a long face an' his forrid stuck out so's it made his haid look like a lopsided shack. He says to me nex' mornin', chewin' ham: 'This is glor'ous. Th' doctors ordered me to come out here 'cause I been studyin' too hard. I been writin' a book called "Esoteric Entomology, ur th' Divine Thisness o' Th' Other," in eight vollums. I got th' fust one nearly begun,' he says. 'I'm f'om Bosting,' says he, 'an we eats on'y black beans f'r thirty days after a death in th' fam'ly,' says he. Then he took off his goggles an' wiped 'em an' arsked f'r more ham.

"This feller's name were Wentworth Emerson Boggs. He had a bamboo rod w'at cost money an' four poun' o' artifeeshul

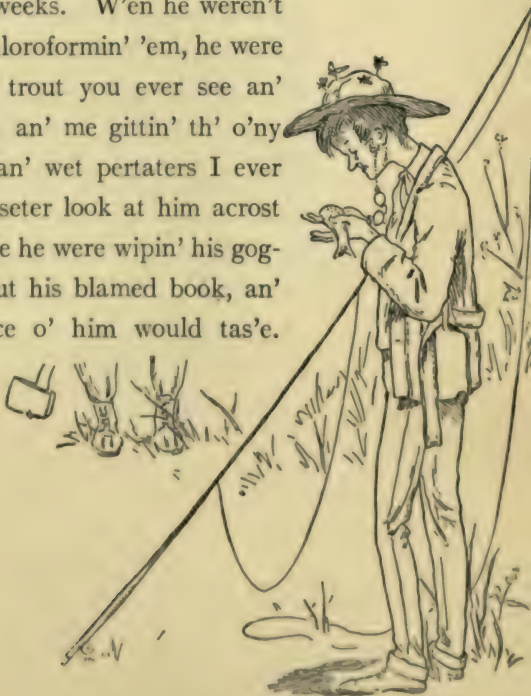
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flies—mebbe four an' a quarter poun'. I laid out we'd eat feesh anyhow, but I didn't know Boggs. He were one o' these here humane peepul w'at caint bear to hu't a livin' thing 'cep' bugs. 'Study 'em,' says he. 'That's w'at you wanten do. Study 'em an' take fotygraphs of 'em an' write things 'bout 'em, so's th' worl' kin know as much 'bout 'em as you do, but don' murder 'em.' I foun' out all this afterward. That mornin' we went a mile down th' crick to a hole I knowed, an' this feller flung out a red fly. Thirty-three trout hit at it to onst an' he hauled in a beaut w'at weighed ev'ry ounce o' two poun'. I says to myse'f here's a chanst f'r dinner anyhow, but he took it off'n the hook an' his eyes got so wet he hadder sling his goggles off, an' he looked at its back fins an' its belly fins an' counted the spots on it, and squinted into its gills

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an' says: 'O beaut'ful produc' o' th' wonderful workshop o' Natur'! O splendid example o' th' workin's o' everlooshun! I hopes these here crool barbs ain' hurt you none!' says he, an' flung it back. I had my axe with me an' I felt o' its aidge an' I says to myse'f, says I: 'Ef this here shy-poke gits any wuss, it's him inter th' groun', an' I wush I hadder spade.'

"Man, that sort o' thing kep' up all that day an' th' nex' day an' th' nex' day, an' f'r a week an' f'r two weeks. W'en he weren't ketchin' bugs an' chloroformin' 'em, he were ketchin' th' fattes' trout you ever see an' throwin' 'em back; an' me gittin' th' o'ny dose o' fried ham an' wet pertaters I ever got in m' life. I useter look at him acrost th' fire at night, w'ile he were wipin' his goggles an' talkin' 'bout his blamed book, an' wonder how a slice o' him would tas'e.



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Finerly I couldn' stan' it no longer, so I begged off f'r ha'f a day an' trotted thirty-three mile three rod inter th' county town. I loaded up on steak, an' w'en I hit th' camp 'bout sundown I hadder pint bottle o' two-weeks-on-th'-poor-farm in my pockit an' a quart w'ere it wouldn' git broke.

" 'Have some,' I says, pullin' out th' cork with my teeth.

"I never see a feller change so. A light come inter his eyes like you was shinin' 'em with a balsam to'ch. His face got w'iter an' he stuck out a han' w'at trimbled, an' then pulled it back. 'No,' says he, 'let be, let be, let be! W'y should a man put a en'my inter his mouth t' make him dronk? They ain' nothin' in it. Better throw that away.'

" 'Well,' I says, 'hol' th' cork, w'ile I throws it away.'

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"He took th' cork an' w'en I tilted th' bottle I see him smell it. 'To keep you f'om makin' a beas' o' yourse'f,' says he, 'to keep you f'om wreckin' your splendid young manhood on this here rock w'at hes sent so many down to everlastin' night,' he says, 'I'll—I'll take some.' I handed him th' bottle an' w'en he put it down they weren't no danger o' me wreckin' myse'f onless I were a glass-chewer.

"Nex' mornin', 'ithout sayin' nothin' to me, he hikes inter th' hotel an' starts a boy to town with a telegraf. Three days arterward we go to th' hotel an' git a ten-gallon jar covered with wicker, an' I lugs it to camp. Boggs says to me it's preserv'tiv t' keep his bugs f'om sp'ilin'. I takes him at his word. Twenty-three times that night he gits out'n his blankets an' goes wanderin' 'roun' in th' dark, an' I don't git much sleep.

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Nex' day he lays 'roun' an' says he thinks he's got som'p'n' he calls penderceeters, an' he ain' goin' t' feesh none. I takes th' rod an' gits back with eighteen specklers an' squats down by th' fire an' cooks th' las' one o' 'em. He gits a w'iff an' rolls over an' groans. I eats nine an' lays th' other nine clost by him. Then I says:

“ ‘Them butterflies I been eatin’ needs preservin’,’ says I, an’ I goes over an’ pulls th’ cork out’n that wicker jar. You never smelt no smell like that smell. It were roses an’ honey, with a snap o’ ginger to it, an’ som’p’n’ else w’at made you think o’ wide yeller fiel’s in th’ fall an’ fat-cheeked gals an’ somebody playin’ th’ fiddle an’ ’nuther somebody singin’ a good song. I poured out a coffee-cup full an’ downed it. Boggs turned over an’ grinned a green sickly grin an’ he says:

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" 'I'm sorter full o' butterflies myse'f,' he says.

"I spill him a cup an' 'nuther cup an' 'nuther cup an', blushin' deeply, he surroun's them nine specklers. That ended it. He riz up in a leetle w'ile an' got a cup f'r hisse'f. I got a cup an' he got one. Then I got one. Then he got one, an' settled down on his hunkers an' tol' me six funny stories an' laffed. Then he singt a sea song an' bellered owdacious. Then he started in on a pome 'bout laylocks bloomin' in a yard an' said it through to th' las' derved line; took him 'mos' a hour. Then he cried an' I'd a-cried a leetle myse'f ef it hadn' been f'r th' preserv'tiv. You gimme stuff like that an' I ain' doin' no weepin' f'r a week. Boggs wiped his eyes an' his goggles an' tried to start a long talk with me 'bout som'p'n' I never heerd afore. He argyed

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real fierce an' I kep' still. Then he put his goggles in his pockit an' wanted to w'ip me 'cause I didn' know nothin'. Then I git techous myse'f an' says it's my turn t' sing, an' I give him 'Th' Soldier's Letter.' They's sixty-three verses in it, an' w'en I got through he were willin' to take 'nuther cup an' be decent.

"Five days we had a good time. I ketched feesh an' we both eat 'em. He lay in camp an' said po'try. He got a leetle th' bes' o' me on th' preserv'tiv, but I got th' exercise, an' so we broke 'bout even. Nex' day w'en I come in at noon he were sittin' by a big fire with my axe in his han', lookin' pale but mad.

" 'I'm ready to sell m' life dearly,' says he, his goggles hangin' to one ear.

"I were a leetle nervis myse'f an' I jumped 'roun' a bit lookin' f'r lumber thieves ur In-

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juns. I takes a cup an' then I laffs. 'Who you goin' t' sell it to?' I says. 'They ain' nobody 'roun' here buyin' damaged goods. W'at's th' matter o' you, anyhow?'

" 'Quail!' says he, shiverin' an' feelin' f'r his goggles an' not findin' 'em.

" 'Quail, hell!' says I.

" 'Man!' says he, 'don' be profane nur jock'ler! Take warnin'!'

"I grabs him an' pours a cup down him, an' then he tells me that w'iles he's sittin' there recitin' a pome called 'Peeper's Pass,' writ by a railway feller name Brownin', a quail come out'n th' woods, walked up to him, biffed him in th' eye with a wing, knockin' his goggles inter th' fire, and then tried to walk off with th' jug. He tol' it so circumstanshul like I hadder b'lieve him. I seen so many funny things in th' woods I b'lieve mos' anythin' untell I prove it's a lie. Boggs

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said this here quail was more'n two feet high an' had a breast on him like a turkey gobbler. His eyes was red, he had a bill curved like a s'ode, he had spurs six inches long, an' a whistle like a steam-injin. It were them spurs what made Boggs git th' axe.

"We had more cups that day an' went to bed peaceful, but ready f'r anythin' w'at wanted t' come 'roun' borryin' trouble. It were 12 o'clock an' th' fire'd died down w'en th' nat'ralist give a whoop like a eight-foot saw hittin' a six-foot hick'ry log an' I landed on my feet, starin' 'roun' like I was crazy myse'f. I heerd a noise like thunder an' I see some big objec' scootin' 'way in th' dark an' 'bout four yards 'bove the groun', ur mebbe four an' a ha'f. Th' jug were tilted over an' it were th' soun' o' its gugglin' w'at brought me to. I leaped at it an' straightened it up an' hefted it an' foun' we hadn'

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los' much, an' give a long breath o' relief. Boggs were pilin' wood on th' fire, his teeth clickin' t'gether, an' w'ent he flame got up he showed me his right laig. Six inches 'bove th' ankle they was a cut a inch deep, like somebody'd done it with a sharp knife.

" 'That's w'ere he bit me,' Boggs says, moanin' like a leetle chile, ' 'n' he'd a had m' life blood ef I hadn' let out that yell. That fetched him. Gimme a cup!'

" 'Yass,' I says, 'that'd fetched anythin' outside'n a deaf man dead f'r six year. W'ere'd you git that voice?'

" ' 'Didn' know I had it tell jus' then,' says he.

" 'Well,' says I, 'you know it now an' you keep it bottled up. I druther be et by th' quail,' I says; 'I druther be et by th' quail 'n have my year-drums busted w'iles I'm 'sleep,' says I.

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“Boggs smiled, but sickly, an’ says: ‘Gimme cup!’

“ ‘Here ’tis,’ I says, ‘but if you goin’ to let out some more whoops like that, you gotter take th’ axe in th’ mornin’ an’ go out an’ fight it out with th’ quail. I wouldn’ yell thataway f’r a bird biggern’ th’ hotel,’ says I.

“ ‘I dunno,’ he says, ‘w’y that survigrus beas’ should jump on me,’ says he. ‘I been kind to an’muls. I wouldn’ et them trouts ef I hadn’ had penderceeters.’

“ ‘Yass,’ I says, ‘but you done et ’em an’ you an’ th’ quail settles it.’

“ ‘Twix’ then an’ daylight Boggs got mightily heartened up, an’ w’en we had breakfus’ he took th’ axe an’ started out. ‘You keep camp,’ he says, ‘an’ ef I ain’ back by dark come out an’ fin’ my bones, in case they’s any o’ ’em lef’, an’ give ’em

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Christun burial. I wanter show you,' says he, 'I ain' 'fraid o' no quail w'at ever climbed a tree. I'm a nat'ralist an' I know the ways o' them things. Gimme cup!'

"W'en Boggs went 'way I got up an' looked 'roun' camp. I thought mebbe I'd been dreamin', too, but I foun' th' track o' the quail clost by th' place w'ere he'd knocked th' jug over. He made a three-toed sign, six an' a quarter inches long by four an' a ha'f inches wide. W'en I seen that I took a cup ur two myse'f. I ain' denyin' that all day I were mighty skeery.

"'Long 'bout dark I heerd a clumpin' in th' bushes, an' got my feet un'er me ready to hike. That year I could do five mile in twelve minits through the woods. It were Boggs, howsomever, pale an' tired, with a holy shine on his face an' his sand-hill crane laigs bendin' un'er him. He stood chokin'

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an' gaspin', an' it took him five minits to git his voice. Then he wiped his goggles an' put 'em back, an' stretched out his han' an' says in a w'isper like he seen a ghos': 'Gimme cup!' I give him one an' two an' three, an' four, f'r that matter, an' he sets down an' tells me this tale:

“ ‘I struck th' trail right here in camp an' follered it f'r six mile northeas' by north. Then it took a ben' an' I follered it three mile southeas' by south. It took another ben' f'r two mile south by southeas' by south an' then run eight mile due wes'. This brought me to a country growed up with shoemake bushes, an' the leaves turnin' red. I could tell by th' shortenin' o' th' stride o' the bird that he were gittin' blamed tired o' hikin', an' I gripped my axe with nervis fingers, determined to have his life f'r his maleecious night attacks on my preserv'tiv.

The Quail of the Fan Hills Jag 175

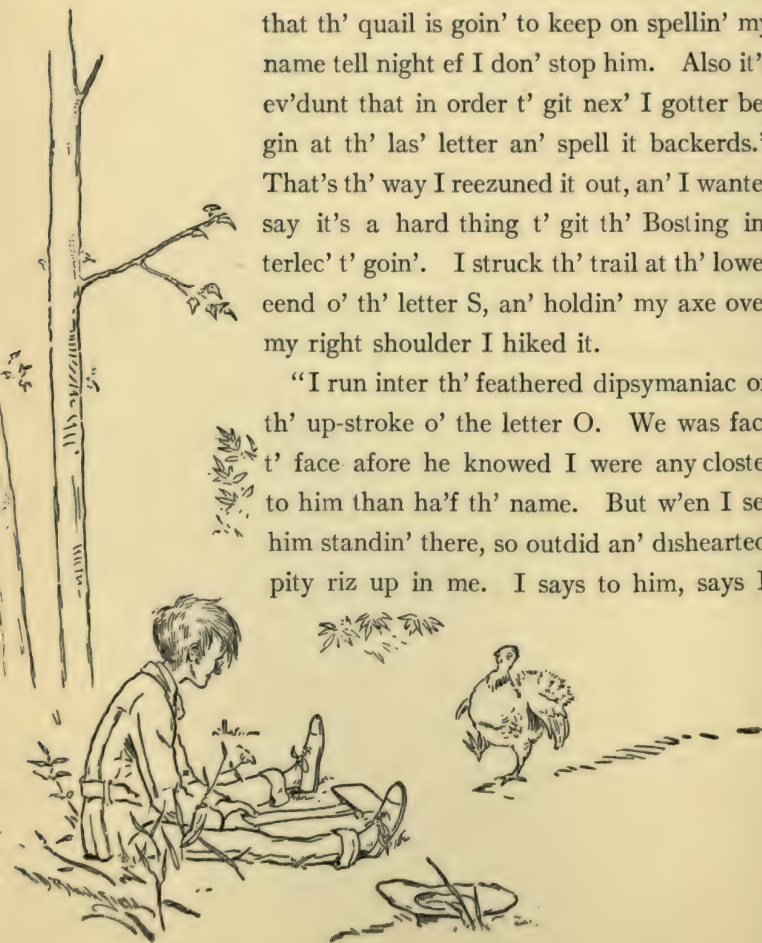
For four hours in an' out among them shoe-makes I follered him, an' now an' then th' noise o' the bushes bein' broke down were plain to my ears. Fact is, after a hour th' trail got to be two feet wide, an' it run in and out in the crazies' fashion you ever see. Gimme cup! Finerly I see a tree twenty foot high an' I climb up it f'r to take a look. May I never shed no more tears on th' grave o' Ralph Waldo Emerson, part o' whose name I'm carryin', if that beas' hadn't travelled 'roun' in them bushes tell he'd broke 'em down so's they spelt my name. There it were, in letters fifty foot long by ten foot wide: "B-O-G-G-S."

"W'at did I do? W'at would any man do? I fell out'n th' tree. Anger seized me, an' I says to myse'f: Plainly, in 'dition to bein' bloodthirsty this here bird has got a sense o' humor. Now, un'er these here con-

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ditions, w'at 'd be th' action o' any one o' them ol' trappers an' hunters an' sleuths an' nat'ralists we Bostingers is allers writin' 'bout? W'at 'd Francis Parkman do ef he were 'live an' here to-day? It's ev'dunt that th' quail is goin' to keep on spellin' my name tell night ef I don' stop him. Also it's ev'dunt that in order t' git nex' I gotter begin at th' las' letter an' spell it backerds." That's th' way I reezuned it out, an' I wanter say it's a hard thing t' git th' Bosting interlec' t' goin'. I struck th' trail at th' lower eend o' th' letter S, an' holdin' my axe over my right shoulder I hiked it.

"I run inter th' feathered dipsymaniac on th' up-stroke o' the letter O. We was face t' face afore he knowed I were any closter to him than ha'f th' name. But w'en I see him standin' there, so outdid an' dishearted, pity riz up in me. I says to him, says I:



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'You invaded my camp an' skeered eight years o' growth out'n me an' vorashushly 'saulted my preserv'tiv an' bit me on th' laig an' robbed me o' sleep. W'at for?' Th' quail scratched his bill with his left foot an' that gimme to un'erstan' it were on 'count o' th' po'try. I says to him, says I: 'How'd Peeper's Pass an' Laylocks in th' Back-Yard hu't you? You didn' un'erstan' 'em, did you? I shore don't.' He took his middle lef' toe in his beak an' spread his tail out wide an' that tol' me I had him w'ere th' loon had th' minner. They were a red han'kerchief tied roun' my haid, so's no butterfly hunter'd take me f'r a flyin' squir'l an' rope me, an' I took it off an' wiped my goggles. Then I looked inter his large liquid eye an' he looked inter my large liquid eye, an' I says, says I: 'Wally! Vale.] Ithout 'nuther word f'om neither

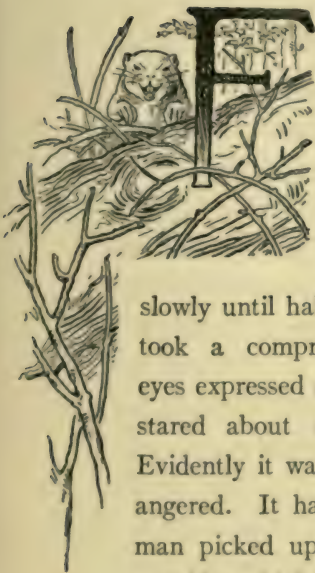
178 The Quail of the Fan Hills Jag

on us, he turned an' worked his way back to th' B eend an' I come out'n th' S. Then I hiked here."

Fergy paused to throw a crust of bread at a chipmunk and the other man asked: "What became of Naturalist Boggs?"

"Oh, I got him back to th' hotel an' shipped him home. He tol' me he were goin' to drop th' book an' write th' story o' th' camp; said he were goin' to name it 'Th' Quail o' th' Fan Hills Jag,' but I guess he must a-run inter 'nuther jug o' preserv-tiv."

MR. FERGUSON'S REMARKABLE WOODCHUCK BAND



FROM a tangled windfall of logs near the camp the bullet-like head of a woodchuck protruded. The animal, a brownish cross between a dachshund and a bulldog, raised itself slowly until half its body was exposed and took a comprehensive survey. Its mild eyes expressed an uninterested inquiry. It stared about and then grinned widely. Evidently it was not alarmed or pleased or angered. It had no emotions. The other man picked up the shell of an exploded cartridge which lay near the fire and started to throw it. His backward arm was caught

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by Fergy, the guide, and the shell removed from his loose fingers.

"Don' do it," said Fergy. "Don' never throw shells at 'em. They're th' mos' harmless' things in th' woods, an' they has they weaknesses."

"Why," said the other man, "what's the matter with you? I only wanted to scare it. They're no good, anyhow."

Fergy settled himself in the curve of a log, picked up a dried branch of pine, threw open his spring-knife, and began to whittle his way through a disquisition on natural history.

"Th' woodchuck," he said, "is a gentle sort o' beas', an' I don' stand f'r hurtin' nothin' w'at don' hurt you, an' ain' good t'eat. Sometimes they's fat fellers comes here f'om th' towns w'at remin's me o' woodchucks. When it rains them fellers sits on

A Remarkable Woodchuck Band 181

th' front gallery o' th' hotel an' lies to one 'nuther. W'en th' sun shines they gits in hammocks an' reads ur shoots at a mark. W'en it's hot they goes to th' ice-house and lays down on th' sawdus'. W'en it's col' they sits by th' fire in th' ginrul room o' th' hotel an' spits at th' coals. Nothin' don' faze 'em. They're allers happy. Arter two weeks they goes back to th' city, and every one o' 'em tells a tale 'bout a big musky w'at chased him to th' top o' a hemlock an' started to saw th' tronk in two w'en remorse overcome him, and he went back to th' lake an' swum 'way slow an' peaceful, belly-up.

"That's th' woodchuck all over. He goes through life takin' up no room. He's satisfied all kinds o' days an' weathers. In th' wet he hunts a dry spot, an' in th' heat he hunts th' shade. W'en th' col' comes he rolls hisse'f inter a ball an' sleeps like w'at

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I sleeps sometimes w'en I been dancin' f'r three nights an' playin' th' fiddle meanw'iles. You ketch a woodchuck comin' out'n his hole an' hit him with stick, an' he forgives you right away an' shows up at th' same time nex' day in th' same place. You shoot him with a 22-calibre, an' he goes down to th' bottom o' his house an' stays there till he gits well, an' w'en he comes out he loves you jus' th' same. He's the fr'enlies' critter! Ef you fin' him 'way f'om home an' walk torrerd him slow, he'll stop an' wait f'r you an' roll on his side an' let you scratch him with a stick. He jus' wants comp'ny, thet's all, an' he's sof'-hearted."

"He lacks initiative and hasn't sufficient ego," said the other man, placidly.

"Yass," Fergy replied, not in the least understanding. "That's it. You kin learn him anything. The side o' his haid bulges

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out an' that means brain. His chin runs back an' that means meekness. His eyes is as kind as a French gal's w'en you done your bes' dance an' she wants to w'isper to you that you're th' keylog o' th' hull jam. He'll steal a leetle roun' camp, but he don' take nothin' o' walue. He ain' like a porky w'at 'll take everything he kin lift an' kin lift anything you put down. I knowed a porky onct w'at et up a pair of oars, a boat landin', a dip-net, an' a tin frog-bucket in four nights."

"A bucket with a perforated top?" the other man asked in surprise.

"Yass."

"What became of the holes?"

"One time a man hired me to go to some timber land thirty-three mile northwes' o' Fifel' an' watch it tell he got ready to put th' choppers in. I knowed I were in f'r six

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weeks all by myse'f an' I fixed f'r it. I tuk a rifle, blankits, grub, an' seven mouth-orgins. My mouth-orgins was chuned f'om A to G, an' I took 'em all in turn.

"One night 'bout star times I were sittin' by th' fire an' givin' myse'f 'Napoleon's Retreat f'om Moscow' w'en I think I see something bob up jus' inside th' succle o' firelight. I couldn' make it out at first, 'cause my eyes was a leetle damp—I allers cry w'en I hear good music—but bimeby I glimpse it's a woodchuck, sittin' up, with his haid to one side an' his right paw laid ag'inst his cheek, sorter knowin'. I looked at him an' he looked at me, an' I says to him, says I: 'Ef you like the "Retreat," ol' man, w'at do you think o' this?' says I, an' I give him 'He Never Cared to Wander' eight times. He come closter an' closter, tell finerly he weren't three foot f'om me, ur mebbe three foot eight

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inches. He jus' set there an' shivered with joy.

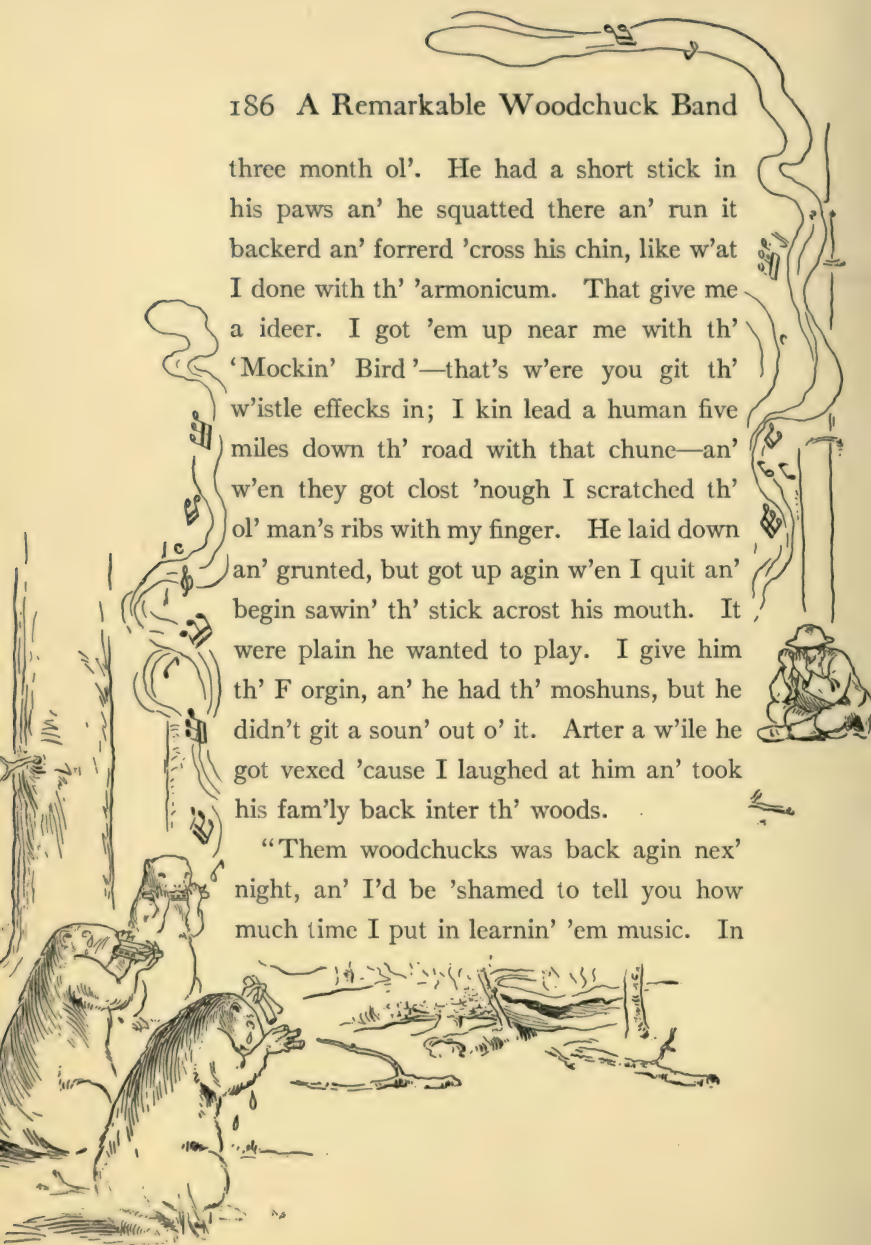
"I could un'erstan' it. That music went inter me an' out'n me inter him an' outer him inter me. He staid there two hours an' I done all I knowed. Onct I got too stronk f'r him with the G orgin—I were playin' 'Jus' before th' Battle, Mother'—an' he fell over on his side an' kicked feeble. I thought he were gone, but I picked up th' B instrument an' livened him up with 'Money Musk' an' he come to all right. 'Fore I went to sleep I were careful to wrap up th' orgins an' put 'em un'er my haid, an' I lef' him sittin' by th' fire, pensive.

"Nex' night I begin on 'She Might Have Knowed a Better Day When She Were in Her Prime.' That's a good chune. I hadn't hit more'n four bars w'en th' woodchuck showed up 'long with his wife an' pup 'bout

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three month ol'. He had a short stick in his paws an' he squatted there an' run it backerd an' forrerd 'cross his chin, like w'at I done with th' 'armonicum. That give me a ideer. I got 'em up near me with th' 'Mockin' Bird'—that's w'ere you git th' w'istle effects in; I kin lead a human five miles down th' road with that chune—an' w'en they got clost 'nough I scratched th' ol' man's ribs with my finger. He laid down an' grunted, but got up agin w'en I quit an' begin sawin' th' stick acrost his mouth. It were plain he wanted to play. I give him th' F orgin, an' he had th' moshuns, but he didn't git a soun' out o' it. Arter a w'ile he got vexed 'cause I laughed at him an' took his fam'ly back inter th' woods.

"Them woodchucks was back agin nex' night, an' I'd be 'shamed to tell you how much time I put in learnin' 'em music. In



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two weeks Popper were doin' pretty well blowin' th' bass, an' th' pup—I called him Ole Bull—were dashin' inter th' tribble mos' han'some. I looked at th' ol' gal an' I says to myse'f, I says: 'You mus' be good f'r som'p'n'; now w'at is it? You cain't play th' orgin; that's a fac'.' Sud'nly I remembered a nigger show I seen to Ashlan' onct, with a black feller at th' eend o' th' row an' hammerin' two bones together melojus. W'en th' fam'ly showed up nex' night I had two deer-ribs cut down to four inches long an' I give 'em to her. Man, you'd orter see her! Happy? They ain' no words to tell how happy she were. An' beat them bones? That minstul would a-su'cided ef he had 'a' been there.

"Say, in two weeks more we was winners. Anybody comin' 'long would a thought a whole orchestry was los' out in th' woods. It

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were mos' affectin' to see 'em w'en we played 'Massa's in de Col', Col' Groun' 'ur 'Ol' Black Joe.' Popper on his hunkers, Ole Bull on his hunkers, Mommer on her hunkers, clatterin' th' bones slow, an' me on th' other side o' th' fire, leadin' th' chune, an' all o' us in tears. Popper'd git so choked up sometimes his bass were reel spluttery an' you couldn' tell w'ether Ole's tribble were th' orgin ur him whinin'. I seen a fortin ahead o' me givin' shows in Ashlan' an' Baraboo an' other big towns, an' I cain't think o' it now without wantin' to w'ip somebody.

"E'vy time," Fergy continued, digging his knife savagely into the loose leaves, "ev'y time one o' us pore folks w'at lives in th' woods gits a good thing some durned yap f'om Noo Yawk ur Chicarger comes 'long an' sp'iles it. I'd thort out a name f'r my

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musicianers—were goin' to call 'em th' Woodchuck Wonders—w'en one day w'en I'm sittin' in camp fryin' bass a waggin drives up an' a feller in it I guided fer two years afore. He got out smilin' as a baskit o' chips an' dumped his traps and shook han's.

“ ‘Heerd you was here,’ he says, says he, ‘an’ come out to have two weeks o’ th’ ol’-time fun. Th’ same wages goes,’ he says, ‘an’ less have a look at them feesh in th’ pan,’ says he.

“W’at were I to do? I knowed in reezun he’d ruin e’vything, but he’d paid me w’en he had me afore an’ I’m a guide by trade an’ I jus’ had to bear it. Now, this feller were one o’ these noisy fellers. He weren’t no hunter, jus’ a feeshermun, an’ he b’lieved feesh were deaf. He were allers yappin’ an’ singin’ roun’ beatin’ on th’ trunks o’ trees

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an' throwin' at th' chipmunks an' raisin' Cain gin'rully. I tol' him 'bout my trained woodchucks an' tried to git him to keep still, but he laughed so's you could 'a' heerd him a mile an' said I were a liar. Night after night I see them pore an'muls hangin' 'bout just beyon' th' light, but I couldn' temp' 'em no closter an' w'en I p'inted 'em out to this feller he said he had eyes like a eagle an' they weren't nothin' there an' laughed agin. I'd 'a' kilt him ef it hadn' been f'r th' wages. I see Popper an' Mommer an' Ole watchin' us, an' I felt like th' end were near—I felt sick an' creepy.

“One day this feller et four poun' o' ha'f-cooked feesh an' that night his stummick hurt him f'r shore-'nough. I couldn' do nothin' 'cep' give him some wet black powder I got out'n a shell. I flung th' ha'f-empty case 'way an' Popper see me do

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it. I never thought nothin', but I might 'a' remembered his way o' dom' ev'thing he see me do. Two days arterward I see near camp a No. 12 shell, bit ha'f in two an' all th' powder et. I tol' you afore woodchucks 'll steal a leetle; that's th' on'y fault they got. Nex' mornin' two shells was missin'. I knowed Popper were makin' his raids at night an' I set up to ketch him an' w'ip him, but he were too smart f'r me. He used up w'at shotgun ammernishun they were in camp, an' then he begin on some 30-30 rifle cattridges w'at this feller brung with him. They went mighty fas'. I dunno how he got th' powder out without firin' 'em off, but he done it. They were nitrit powder in them shells an' th' tas'e o' it jus' set him wild. Seemed like he didn' have no sense lef'. He were still smart 'nough to do his stealin' w'en we was 'sleep, but

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he'd take a dozen o' 'em to onct an' empty cases got t' be thicker'n acorns roun' there. My feller he thort a lot o' them shells, said he couldn' git no more w'en they was all gone, an' he raved. Seemed like he sorter s'pected me, but I looked at him hard an' said som'p'n' 'bout daid men not singin' no more songs, an' he laid it to th' wood-mice.

"This were the way it wound up: I kep' 'wake one night by drinkin' a gallon o' black coffee 'fore I turned in. 'Bout two in th' mornin' I were lyin' in my blankits in th' tent, starin' up at th' ridge-pole. This feller he turned over and says to me, says he:

" 'W'at's that?'

"I heerd a queer rustlin' in one corner o' th' tent and that's w'ere we kep' th' guns an' cattridges. The dirt were covered with pieces o' sackin' to keep the gun-stocks dry. I seen th' sacks move an' then Popper's haid

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stuck out. The feller jumped f'r him, but quicker'n a wink the haid went out o' sight an' we hear th' ol' reskil scurryin' 'way un'ergroun'. We both knowed he'd dug a tunn'l f'om som'ers out in th' woods. Woodchucks is diggers f'om 'way over hinder. I says to th' feller, says I: 'Less go to sleep. He won' be back no more to-night,' an' he says: 'All right,' says he.

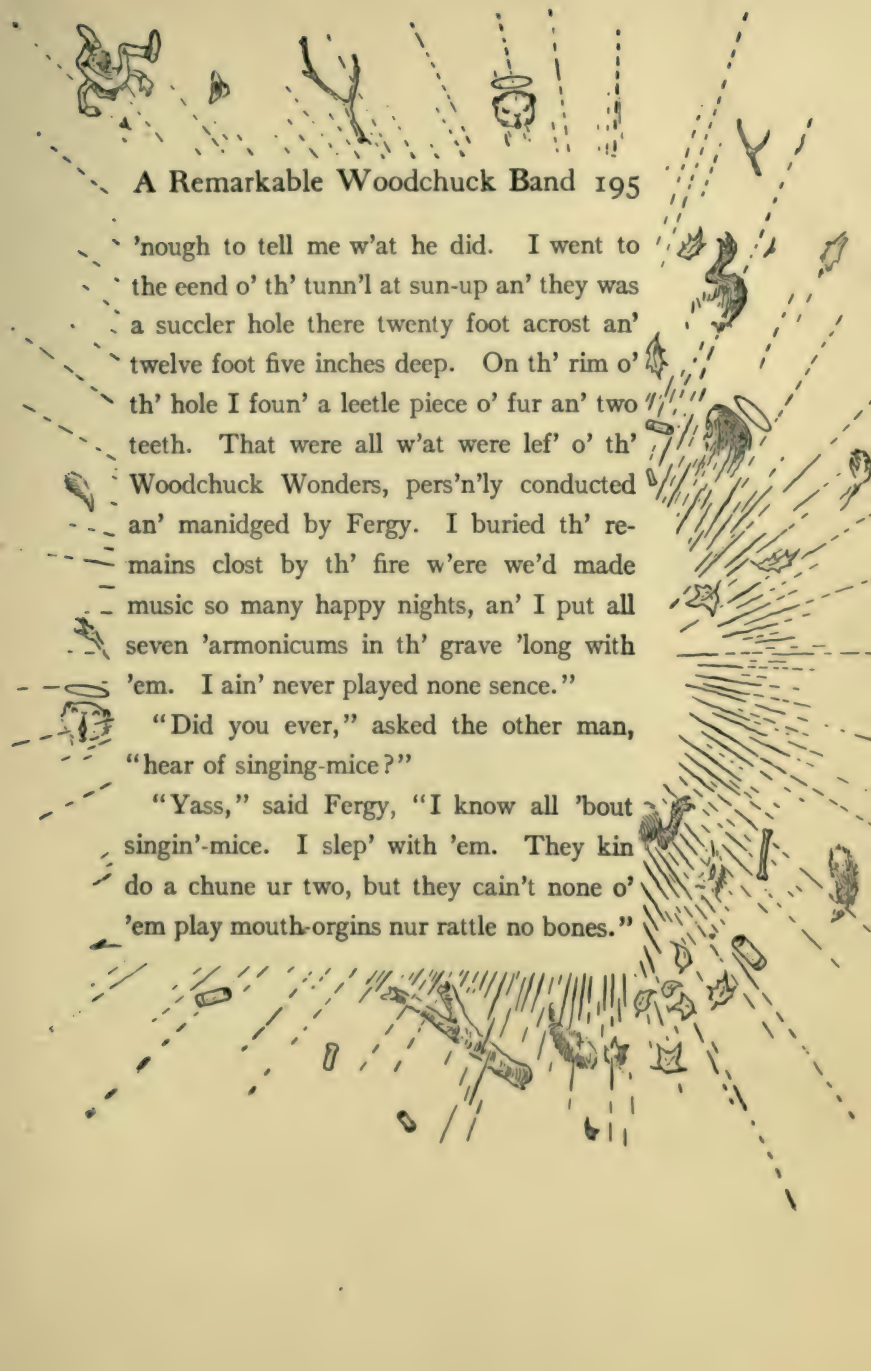
"But he were meaner'n a p'isoned skunk an' he didn' go to sleep. He laid there an' studied up a way to git even with Popper. Bimeby he got up w'en he heerd me snorin' an' went to th' fire an' got a torch an' started out to fin' th' other eend o' th' tunn'l. He foun' it eighty-four yard south-eas' o' camp an' w'en he got to it Popper stuk his haid out'n it, innercent-like, to see w'at the trouble was 'bout. Mommer an' Ole Bull was with him. W'at's this feller

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do but jam th' torch agin Popper's w'iskers,
an' him full o' nitrit powder at that!

"Th' loudes' thunderclap w'at ever
clapped weren't more'n a sigh to th' noise
w'at follered. Th' trees rocked an' th'
leaves come patterin' down like hail. Th'
tent were knocked flat an' w'en I could git
out f'om under it bits o' fire were scattered
all 'roun'. I raked some o' 'em together
an' made a torch o' balsam an' started out
to explore, ur git clean away f'om there ur
som'p'n'. A hunderd an' fifty-two yard f'om
camp I run onter this feller sprawled out in
th' woods, with his face blacker'n th' inside
o' a cow an' his clothes on fire. I put him
out an' lugged him to th' lake and dumped
him in, an' w'en th' col' wattah hit him he
come to an' says, says he: 'Were anybody
kilt, conduct'r?'

"Some time 'bout daylight he got sense



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'nough to tell me w'at he did. I went to the eend o' th' tunn'l at sun-up an' they was a succler hole there twenty foot acrost an' twelve foot five inches deep. On th' rim o' th' hole I foun' a leetle piece o' fur an' two teeth. That were all w'at were lef' o' th' Woodchuck Wonders, pers'n'ly conducted an' manidged by Fergy. I buried th' remains clost by th' fire w'ere we'd made music so many happy nights, an' I put all seven 'armonicums in th' grave 'long with 'em. I ain' never played none sence."

"Did you ever," asked the other man, "hear of singing-mice?"

"Yass," said Fergy, "I know all 'bout singin'-mice. I slep' with 'em. They kin do a chune ur two, but they cain't none o' 'em play mouth-orgins nur rattle no bones."

THE WILDCAT AND THE CHEESE SERIES



HERE being no lantern in the camp on Pickerel Lake, Fergy the guide had stuck a knot of balsam pine in the fork of a tree near by and it cast a red and fitful light over the tail-gate of a wagon which he had mounted

upon two forked uprights to serve as a table. The other man, seated on an up-ended grocery box, had eaten his fish, his slice of light bread fried in grease, had drunk a tin cupful of black coffee, and was doubtfully examining a yellow mass, thin and hard, that lay before him.

"That's cheese," said Fergy, standing near and exploring the right-hand pocket of his overalls for crumbs of tobacco.

"Yes?" said the other man questioningly. "As one interested in scientific research I am glad to have my doubts removed. I had concluded that it was a section of Palæozoic egg. It has antediluvian wrinkles and a prehistoric smell."

"Yass," said Fergy. "It's funny, but I never have any luck when there's cheese in camp. I told that gal at the hotel not to put no cheese in with our grub an' th' first thing I jam my han' agin' w'en I unpack th' box is that there. Don't send it to nobody you like. Keep it an' hit a Injun with it. You fellers w'at takes three drinks an' then hugs your en'mies an' fights your fr'ens make me fayteegeed. Hit him anw'ere between his knees an' his hair an' it'll fetch him. I done my bes' with it, though."

The other man said nothing. Fergy picked up a red-alive coal in his fingers,

dangled it in his horny palm, deftly canted it on top of his pipe, sucked violently, and resumed:

“Ain’t never had no luck with cheese sense ol’ man Blandon o’ Winchester, Injyanny, come up here. He’s a banker w’en he’s at home. Hired me f’r thirty days an’ said he didn’ give a prom’sory note w’ether he caught fish ur not. W’at he wanted was res’ an’ quiet an’ th’ sweet w’isperin’s o’ mother natur’ an’ balsam air. I seen them folks afore. Gin’rully they gits tired in two days an’ you gotter lug ’em back to th’ hotel w’ere they kin lie in bed o’ mornin’s an’ play four-ball billiards at night on a table w’at soun’s like you was runnin’ a truck loaded with railroad iron acrost it. Ol’ Blandon, howsomever, weren’t that kind o’ natur-lover. He were out f’r recreashun an’ he shore staid with me. Nice ol’ man he were,

easy an' peaceful an' didn' look like he were more'n half awake at no time. I doan' understan' how he made his money. Billy Humes, 'nuther guide, tol' he were wuth four billion dollars, an' he got it from a red-headed Injyanny feller w'at said he had a im'pedment in his speech f'om childhood w'at kep' him f'om bein' a liar. I never packed no such pack as that pack w'at I packed f'r ol' Blandon. I packed it f'om Boyd's Hotel to this here very place—173 poun's 8 ounces th' fust load an' 181 poun's 11 ounces th' nex' load. I made two trips, you see."

"Yep," said the other man, sticking a splinter into his cigar to increase its draught.

"Mos' o' it," Fergy went on, "were grub w'at he'd brought f'om Injyanny. He were so careful o' it I think he mus' a-kep' it in th' bank vault. They was 'nough canned

goods to stock a store—canned goods with writin' on 'em I couldn' read; I never see nothin' like 'em before. An' cheese! He were a conosher 'bout cheese. Had thirty dif'runt kinds; ur, mebbe, thirty-one. I learnt th' names o' some o' 'em, but not all. If I could a-learnt th' names o' all o' them cheeses I could go up to ol' Claude Ducharme's shack next winter an' talk to any French gal in th' bunch. This is w'ere th' story begins:

“Fus' night in camp ol' Blandon took a hatchet an' broke open one o' his dry-goods boxes w'at I had lugged acrost th' trail an' took out a little roun' can an' cut it open with his knife an' said:

“‘Fergy, we'll have a leetle Kom-em-bare.’

“He spread the stuff on some toas' an' handed it to me an', sir, she were good.

Wildcat and Cheese Series 201

We et arf th' can an' lef' it settin' on th' table—was usin' this same tail-gate we got now—an' went to bed.

“Long 'bout 1 o'clock in th' mornin' I was woke by the stranges', sweetes' music I ever heerd in my life, an' I uster be a fiddler myse'f. Ol' Blandon were playin' 'nuther kin' o' music on his nose an' it made me so mad I'd a-gone over to him an' kicked him out'n his blankets if they hadn't a-been \$2 a day in it. I laid there an' lissened tell I was broad awake an' then I lifted my haid an' looked.

“Sittin' by th' fire that had mos' died down, his tail curled ov'r his back an' a grin on his face like th' angils wear, were the bigges' wildcat I ever see before ur sence. He were so big I took him f'r a young painter, an' he were chock full o' cheese. The empty can were near him an' he were so joyful he



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hadder sing. Look here! I heerd cats sing afore then, an' they singin' ain't nothin' like Armalee Belle Smith's in Fifiel', w'at kin set down at a melojun an' make you cry an' wush you was back in Canady agin, but that cat laid ov'r Armalee like a five-year-ol' musky ov'r a dogfish.

"I love musick, an' that were musick, but I don' want no wildcats roun' whur I'm sleepin', so I reached f'r a chunk to throw at it, when, whoosh! it were gone. Fur's it went, howsomever, I could hear them beautiful strains floatin' back through th' woods. If they'll on'y sing like that w'en I die an' git to heaven, I'll stay with 'em tell hell freezes over.

"I tol' ol' Blandon 'bout it nex' mornin' an' he looked at me an' at th' em'ty cheese-can an' arsked me w'at my stummick was made out'n. I tol' him it was made out'n

the same sort o' mateeryul as his'n an' if he didn' like th' way I pulled the boat, he mought pull it hisse'f. He said he wasn' thinkin' 'bout boats, but 'bout the sing'ler an' stim'latin' effeck o' Kom-em-bare cheese on th' untootered imag'nashun.

"We fish't a leetle that day an' didn' ketch nothin'. He were lookin' at me mos' o' th' time an' ev'ry leetle w'ile he'd arsk how big that cat were, an' how many stripes it had, an' w'ether its tail were curled over its back ur on'y curved, an' a lot o' dam nonsense like that. I thinks to myse'f one time I'd give th' boat a leetle twis' an' let him spatter 'bout in twenty feet o' wattuh, but he were a ol' man an' they were \$2 a day in it.

"That night he went to his treasure-ches' agin an' took out 'nuther priceless can o' smell an' says:



“‘Fergy, we’ll have a leetle Rokefort.’

“He spread some on a piece o’ toas’ an’ give it to me, an’, sir, she were good. We et ‘arf th’ can an’ then we wrapped it up in a piece o’ paper, tight, an’ we went to bed.

“It couldn’ a-been 12 o’clock w’en I heerd th’ song. It seemed to me like it had a dis’pinted note in it—a sorter soun’ o’ sadness like life ain’ w’at it oughter be, ‘n mother’s gone with th’ hired man, an’ so forth. I look up an’ there’s th’ cat, lyin’ on its stummick an’ gazin’ at th’ coals with its big yellor eyes an’ singin’ soft an’ low. I git on my all-fours an’ crawl ov’r to Blandon an’ yank him by his gray w’iskers.

“‘Here,’ I w’ispers, ‘you ol’ Injyanny never was, you’re th’ fus’ man w’at ev’r said that Fergy lied an’ lived to git away with it,’ I says. ‘Raise up an’ look at that cat, ur I’ll chaw you on th’ ear,’ says I.

"I were mighty hot at Blandon. He raised up keeful-like an' took one look an' says, wild-like:

"'I nev'r expected him to pay th' delayed in'teres' on that note, an' compun' interes' too,' he says, an' th'owed a fit.

"Pore ol' man, it knocked him right off'n th' thwart. I jumped up an' pitched a bucket o' wattuh ov'r him an' he set up, wipin' his w'iskers. Th' cat give one leap that took him forty feet three inches, let out a final bar o' the mos' lonesome musick I ever heer an' were gone. As he went he slung his haid back an' I see a reproachful look in his eyes, as much as to say: 'Gimme Kom-em-bare, ur don' gimme nothin'. That cat were a good deal like some people. It didn' cos' him nothin' the fus' night an' because he didn' git quite so good th' nex'

night—it still costin' him nothin'—he had a kick comin'.

“Nex' day Blandon were the mildes' man you ever see an' talked to me sorter respectful-like. He were so busy thinkin' 'bout th' cat he couldn' feesh, an' we jus' pulled 'bout th' lake, me takin' it easy an' him slingin' langwidge in a fr'en'ly voice.

“That night we tried Mr. Cat on 'Grooyare' an' we git a leetle imertashum o' four fiddles an' a bass drum playin' th' 'Arkansas Trav'ler.' Nex' night we give him 'E-dum' an' I think he'd a-jumped on us if I hadn' pulled a gun an' yelled at him to go 'way.

“Nex' night ol' Blandon he says to me:

“‘This is a int'restin' vis'tor o' ours,' says he, 'an' I like him an' his songs, but I druther feed him on gold dolluhs out in this wild'ness as my cheeses,' he says, 'f'r my

stock's gittin' low an' Gawd knows w'ere I'm t' git any more,' says he. 'To-night, Fergy, my boy,' he says, 'I'm goin' to make him wush he'd a-kep' th' simple ap'tites o' his childhood,' he says.

"With that he goes to his box an' drors out a can an' gits to th' winnard o' me an' chopt the top open. Say, I been in th' Chicarger stock yards in Augus', I been in places w'ere th' crick were dammed an' dried up an' five thousan' ton o' feesh lay rottin' in th' sun; I been in wuss places nur them, but I never smell no smell like that smell. I jus' git to th' oth'r side o' ol' Blandon, an' I say I ain't got but one life to live an' one death to die an' I ain't goin' to die in no such disgraceful fash'n as that so long's they's a gun loaded within ten mile, I say. He larfed and says he:

"'This here's Lim-bugger,' says he, 'an'

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any livin' bein', man ur cat,' he says, 'is gotter be eddycated up to it,' says he.

"With that he took a spoon an' et ha'f o' it an' lef' th' other ha'f in th' can settin' on th' table."

Fergy's pipe having gone out, he put on another coal and meditatively sucked for five minutes. The other man, chewing the end of his burning cigar, stared at the fire and said never a word. The guide glanced at him sideways several times and once half turned toward him as if expecting him to speak, but his only reward was continued silence. Heaving a sigh, he went on:

"At 10 o'clock I was lyin' awake an' I heerd a long, sad miaouw. I looked in time to see th' cat hot-footin' it away f'om th' fire. Fifteen times he come back an' went away ag'in before he could git close 'nough

to th' stuff to tackle it. Finerly he gritted his teeth an' jammed his nose inter th' can an' brought it out agin with a hunk o' that cheese stickin' to it. He reminded me o' a ol' booze-fighter w'at's got to kick hisse'f to make hisse'f take a drink in th' mornin'. W'en he got his nose out'n th' can an' mebbe a tas' o' th' Lim-bugger in his mouth, he turned thirty-four back han'springs one aft'r th' other, an' they nev'r were no such soun's as them soun's w'at come out'n him. He howled, screamed, barked, yapped, coughed, miaouwed, sobbed ur choked, spluttered, spit an' yelled, an' all th' time he were goin' ov'r an' ov'r like one o' these here firew'eels they touch off on th' night o' th' Fourth o' July. Ol' Blandon he set up in his blankits an' prayed. Th' las' I see o' that cat he was a rewolwin' bundle o' fur, goin' through the branches twenty-three feet

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'bove groun' an' gittin' swifter with ev'ry turn. I hadder laugh.

"Ol' Blandon went back to Injyanny aft'r aw'ile, an' th' groun' 'roun' here looked like it had snowed em'ty cheese-cans. Now, this here cat, afore he struck that Kom-em-bare on th' fatil night, was jus' a plain or'nary wildcat, purty big f'r his size, but with nothin' much th' matter with him, but that fall we heerd o' him in more ways than one. His natur' was ruint by excess. His confidence in humankind were undermined, his moral'ty were a wreck, an' he started out to git even with us all because a irrespons'ble ol' set o' w'iskers-on-a-bone had come in here an' led him astray. He gotter be a rogue, livin' by hisself an' not 'socialin' with no oth'r cats. We begin to fin' fawns dead aroun' in the woods with they th'oats cut. F'om fawns he went to calves an'

killed six f'r Hugh Boyd in six nights. W'en he couldn' git calves he'd take lambs an' full-growed sheep, an' then he started in on colts, an' he killed a lot o' 'em. Up to this time he hadn' nev'r tasted no human blood.

"One day, howsomever, Aleck McWhirter, th' lumber-camp tel'phone, started ov'r th' trail on a sixteen-mile lope to Fifiel' to git him a drink, 'cause he were dry. Goin' 'long he took out a big spring knife somebody giv' him an' tried to open it. He heerd a yowlin' behin' him an' sence he hadn't had th' drink yit, he were a leetle skeery. He cut his finger on th' blade an', as it bled some, he wiped his han' on a bush an' then begin to eat up th' groun' like he were doin' a hundred-mile stunt atween suns. 'Long come this here cat, eight minits arterward, an' lickt th' leaves. That

settled it. Nex' week a leetle boy wandered out'n Fifiel' an' he ain' nev'r been heerd of sence."

Fergy paused impressively, but got no exclamation of wonder or horror or alarm, nor any indication of interest whatever.

"Nex' week a little gal wandered out'n Fifiel' an' she ain' nev'r been heerd of sence. Nex' week a leetle boy wandered out'n Fifiel' and he ain' nev'r been heerd of sence. Nex' week a leetle gal wandered out'n Fifiel' an'—"

"Get along! Get along!" said the other man. "When did you become a census enumerator?"

"This kep' up," said Fergy undisturbed, "untell ev'body in Price county was a-huntin' that cat, but they never seen no sign o' him. Th' snow were on th' groun' two inches

deep w'en Baptiste Lacroix come down th' trail headin' Wes'. Baptiste had been drunk f'r two weeks in Fifiel', patronizin' Mike Hennessy's bar. W'en his money were all gone Hennessy tol' him they were a lumber-camp eighty-three mile away w'ere he could work hard an' git some more. Which were proper, 'cause nobody tol' him to go inter Hennessy's in th' fus' place. Baptiste, bein' drunk, lit out 'thout 'nuther word, an' as he come 'long he were fixin' up how to git even with Hennessy. 'Cause he were French an' not Irish nur English nur Scotch, this scheme come to him: He stopt in th' trail an' pulled off his shoe an' sock an' took out his knife.

“ ‘I weel be revanched,’ says he. ‘I weel cut off ze lar-r-rge toe an’ hang eet on ze bush. Some day—some time—zat Henness’ come long an’ see ze po’ toe an’ say:

Ah-h-h, I haf done wr-r-rong to ze po' Baptiste; he good fellaire, af' h'all. I weel let zem know ze Fr-r-rainchmon mus' not be eensolted.'

"So he w'acked off his big toe an' hung it on a saplin' an' limped on with his right shoe full o' blood an' w'en he got to Boyd's we put him in the guides' house an' kep' th' pink giraffes f'om breakin' in an' bitin' him f'r a week.

"That cat come 'long half a hour arterward, smelt th' blood an' et th' toe. That toe had in it beer, w'iskey, brandy, rum, absinthe, wine, an' wood alkyhol—mos'ly wood alkyhol. That cat went 'way an' laid down in th' brush. Nex' day, hikin' out through th' snow f'r a deer, I heerd th' ol' songs, soundin' out ov'r th' silint wastes. They was th' same, an' yet they was not the same. They were a wil', unairthly screech



runnin' 'long under 'em an' I couldn' un'er-
stan' it. W'en I got closter I seen w'at th'
matter were. Th' cat had the jimjams. It
were singin' its bes' song an' its wors' song
all mixt up together, an' now an' then it'd
stop an' throw fifty-two somersets backerd
and forrerd. Mem'ry were gittin' th' bes'
o' it. Th' ol' nights in Blandon's camp was
throngin' thick upon it, an' it were mixin'
in its song demands f'r all sorts o' cheeses.
One minit it thought it had Kom-em-bare,
an' no 'ermit throsh ev'r singt to th' moon
like w'at that cat singt. Then it'd run all
th' way down through Roke-fort, Groo-yare,
E-dum, an' so on to Lim-bugger, an' then
th' handspring act'd start. I stood it all
right w'ile th' concert were goin' on, but
when th' Lim-bugger stage begannd I took
five shots at it an' nev'r tetched a hair. Th'
las' sight o' it I got it were goin' tail fus'

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atween th' hemlocks an' makin' good time at that.

"Now, this cat had charickter an' staminy an' yuther things I heerd a temp'runce lec'rer talk 'bout onct. You mayn't b'lieve me, but it got ov'r them jimmies an' braced right up. It quit human blood an' colts an' sheep an' calves an' fawns. I useter borry cheeses—all sorts o' cheeses—f'om Boyd's guests an' leave 'em aroun' in th' woods, an' it wouldn' tetch 'em. I took as much pride in that cat's goodness as if it had 'a' been my own chile. I tol' ev'body 'bout it an' arsked 'em not to hurt it if it come up to 'em an' singt in pure gladness o' 'art. They said they wouldn'.

"They come a feller up here f'om Chircager, a long pale feller with curls and knock-knees. He had on a bike soot with yellor stockin's an' he lugged a ol' buff'ler

gun somebody'd give him f'r a joke. The cal'ber o' this gun were 52 an' it made a roar like 200 hypnertized bulls. He writ his name on the regist'r—this feller—an' I mem'rized it in two days. It were 'T. Campbell Wordsworth Coleridge Percy Bysshe Shelley Beach,' an' the wimmin guests they thort a heep o' him an' said he were a poick. This Beach useter t' git in a leetle boat on Dog Lake, clost to th' hotel, an' float aroun' with his buff'ler gun an' a stub o' pencil an' a piece o' paper an' make rhymes w'at he read to th' wimmin at supper. One day, w'en he were floatin' roun' an' scribblin', th' cat come down to th' lake to git wattuh. Now remember it hadn' drunk no lickier an' et no cheese f'r pretty near a year. Jus' plain food an' col' wattuh an' reg'ler hours was good 'nough f'r it. This Beach he glanced up an' seen it an', bein'

skeered to death, he flung up his buff'ler gun an' shet both eyes an' pulled th' trigger. Nat'rally, under them circumstances, he tore th' cat's head off.

"Now," said Fergy, rising and pointing a gnarled forefinger at his companion, "w'at's th' moril o' that?"

"The moral," said the other man, yawning, "is: Never steal from an Indiana banker."

"It ain't," said Fergy. "The moral is: Lake wattuh ain't no good f'r nothin' cep' feesh."

TWO "BALSAM BILLS" AND THEIR ENDINGS



ERG Y the guide swayed easily backward and forward in the boat, his short oars biting the water only lightly. It was his normal mode of progression and he was competent to keep it up for twelve hours on end without a hint of fatigue.

"This," said the other man, elevating his rod to bring his bait to the surface, glancing back to see that it was all right and settling again, "this is good air, good water, and a good country. You raise some big men here. I've watched the axemen and it seems

to me that if the Government ever wants to recruit an engineering company for making army roads through a difficult land northern Wisconsin is the place to do the recruiting in. There ought to be fine-looking women hidden away around here, too."

"Yass," said Fergy, "th' men's strong 'nough an' th' wimmen's purty 'nough. Th' trouble is th' men ain't got no sense an' th' gals is worse'n th' men. I seen lots o' trubble roun' here 'bout gals—an' th' gals he'ped it on. I ain't had none myse'f 'cause \$2 a day in th' summer, \$3 a day loggin' in th' winter, an' a jug o' ol' forty-rod onct in a w'ile is good 'nough f'r me.

"Feller I knowed come through Fifiel' one winter an' see me doin' a Injun polky in th' middle o' th' street. I been sick with fever an' ain' workin' none, but I got money 'nough to s'lute th' bar-keeps eighty times

a day. He ketched me by th' elbow, this feller did, an' he says:

“‘What you doin’ out here in th’ snow actin’ crazy?’ he says. ‘You’re so full o’ bug-juice its runnin’ out’n your years. Go home an’ go to bed; you’ve got one foot in th’ grave,’ says he.

“‘Yass,’ I says; ‘I got one foot in th’ grave an’ th’ other on th’ moon. G’way! Wow!’ I says.

“He says: ‘You’re a good guide,’ an I says: ‘I be. Wow!’

“He says, says he: ‘Whyn’t you git you a good ’oman an’ marry an’ settle down?’ says he. An’ I says:

“‘I’m full o’ licker, ain’t I? an’ I’m dancin’, ain’t I? an’ to-morrer I’ll have a haid like somebody was filin’ a saw inside o’ it, won’ I? But nex’ day I’ll be in purty fair shape, won’ I? an’ th’ day arter that

I kin outjump, outrun, an' outlas' any man in Price County,' I says. 'But w'at happens to me,' I says, 'ef I git married? It's allers nex' mornin' then,' I says. 'It's allers saw-filin's in your haid; it's allers the devil to pay an' not feesh 'nough in all the lakes to pay him,' says I. 'Come have a drink, ur g'way,' I says, an' the feller he comes an' has a drink."

The other man struck a weed with his trailing spoon and reeled in to disengage it. Casting out once more he remarked briefly: "That's good philosophy for the distilleries."

"Yass," Fergy said quietly, "it's good all roun', that is. If th' wimmen don' git a man one way, they'll git him 'nuther. Sometimes they don' love him 'nough an' sometimes they loves him too well. Sometimes they ruin him an' sometimes they lets him ruin hisse'f. This love bizness ain't

nothin' but se'fishness arter all an' th' se'fisher a man is th' worst he gits it in th' neck; th' se'fisher he is th' more he loves an' th' more wimmen he wants. This sorter feller in love is like a miser with money, he cain't never git 'nough. He not only wants one 'oman f'r hisse'f an' 'ginst ev'ybody else, but he wants all wimmen f'r hisse'f an' 'ginst ev'ybody else. He jus' c'lects wimmen, like some crazies w'at comes here c'lects bugs an' butterflies. I knowed a man like that onct.

"His name were Bill Peavy an' he were a shore axeman an' log-roller. We called him Balsam Bill 'cause he wouldn't sleep on no bed now'ere lest it were made out'n balsam boughs; uster spend a good part o' his time gatherin' th' boughs an' arrangin' em so's all th' pints'd stick up an' make his lyin' sof'. He were six foot two an' a harf

inches high an' four foot wide an' he weighed 227 poun's 17 ounces o' bone an' muscle an' skin an' ha'r. He had a arm on him like th' hind leg o' a Illinoy steer. His skin were white as milk, he had yellor curls an' a yellor mustash an' blue eyes. He didn' have no sense, but he were a shore good-looker an' th' wimmen took to him like they wasn' nothin' else in britches f'r fifty mile aroun'.

"Up at Tony Biossat's shack winter 'fore las' they was gals to burn. They was some hard men in that gang, but th' hardes' an' se'fishes' were this Balsam Bill. 'Mongst 'em were Willyum Jakes, a little pale Frenchmun, with a grizzled mustash an' crow's feet 'roun' his eyes. He loved a gal name Tonette Villebois like a houn' pup loves deer meat, an' they was to be married in th' spring. Balsam foun' it out an' shook his yellor curls at Tonette an' she were his'n.

Willyum he got paler an' paler an' took to drinkin' Canuck high-wines. He never had much to say at no time an' he went plumb silint. One night without sayin' nothin' he heaved a bottle at Balsam an' a secon' arter were knocked colder'n a wedge. We laid him by th' fire an' kep' on dancin'. He come to a leetle afore daylight an' went out, an' we never see him no more.

“Nex' night, 'bout time f'r th' people to git together an' begin raisin' the roof agin, we heerd a scream like a horse havin' his th'oat cut. We rushed out an' fifty yards f'om th' shack were Balsam Bill lyin' flat, with snow stickin' to his yeller curls an' a big knife socked to th' handle in his breas'. He were stone daid with th' funnies' look on his face you ever see—a look o' wonder an' disgus' an' s'prise an' shame. That look seemed to say:


" 'My! my! Here be I, bigger 'n a moose an' purtier 'n a speckled pup, an' done up by a leetle chalky Frenchmun 'arf th' size o' a poun' o' soap arter a hard day's washin'!' 'Course we knowed who done it an' course we didn't look f'r him. All we arks in th' woods is that a man have got th' right on his side an' Willyum Jakes were right."

There was no doubt of Fergy's utter seriousness during the narration of this tragedy. Indeed, his oars had kept pace with his memories and the boat was flying along, ten feet from the lake edge, with the live frog at the end of the line skipping jerkily from wavelet to wavelet. He slowed down quickly and at the instant a covey of ruffled grouse rose from the sumach thicket near by and whirled away in mimic thunder. Fergy's set dark face relaxed and he smiled genially,


looking at his companion in half-quizzical fashion.

"I knowed a pheasant onct over by Mason Lake," he began. [The name of the ruffed grouse all through the middle northwest is pheasant.] "I called him Balsam Bill. Fus' place, I foun' him in a thicket o' balsam pine saplin's, an secon' place, he were a good deal like th' feller I been talkin' 'bout. He were th' boss pheasant o' all th' pheasants, shore. His neck were stretched up an' he were a yard high f'om th' feathers on his toes to th' leetle topknot on his haid. His bill were harf open, his laigs wide apart an' his eyes was red as blood. Th' ruff roun' his neck stuck out like a game-rooster's w'en he's gittin' down to biznis an' his wings was goin' so fas' they looked like two blurs on his side. You never heer no such rackit as he made. Now an' then he'd

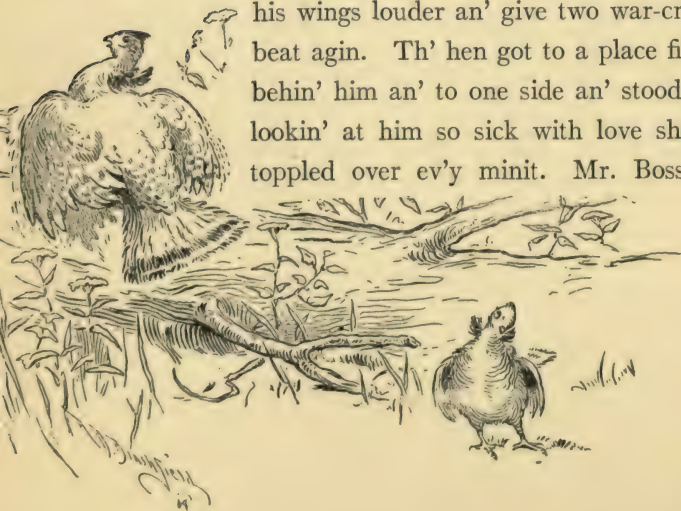

stop drummin' f'r a secon' an' let out a war-cry that sounded like th' bell o' a bull moose an' then he'd begin agin to cut th' air like a buzz-saw.



"I see plain 'nough w'at he were up to; he were callin' f'r hens an' any cock-pheasants w'at didn' like it could come 'long an' he'p theyse'fs.



"Bime-by I heerd a leetle sof' cluck-cluck an' the pretties' hen in th' woods come sidlin' 'long th' aidge o' th' glade. She'd go forrerd two foot an' sorter hang back an' go forrerd a yard, f'r she were jus' drunk with that drummin' an' didn' have no command o' herse'f a-tall. Th' cock he beat his wings louder an' give two war-cries an' beat agin. Th' hen got to a place five feet behin' him an' to one side an' stood there, lookin' at him so sick with love she near toppled over ev'y minit. Mr. Boss Man



didn' pay no 'tention to her. He were honin' f'r trouble an' didn' have no time f'r females. It come.

"Like a crazy bullit with a tail on it a big brown cock whizzed through th' trees five foot 'bove th' groun', an' when he reached th' centre o' th' glade he th'owed hisse'f half backerd to a check an' hit th' grass as light as a feather. Then he spread his wings fur as they'd go, hopped up an' down three times, an' said, says he: 'Cr-r-r-kaw! cr-r-r-kaw!' He weren't more'n two-thirds as big as the log feller, but he had his nerve with him. My chap he sailed down in a harf-secon' an' they was a fight f'r your w'iskers if you wore sixty poun' o' 'em. I were sorry f'r th' leetle one 'cause he were game, but it were over in a minit. Th' big one riz five foot in th' air, with legs stiff an' haid down, fell on th' leetle one's back,

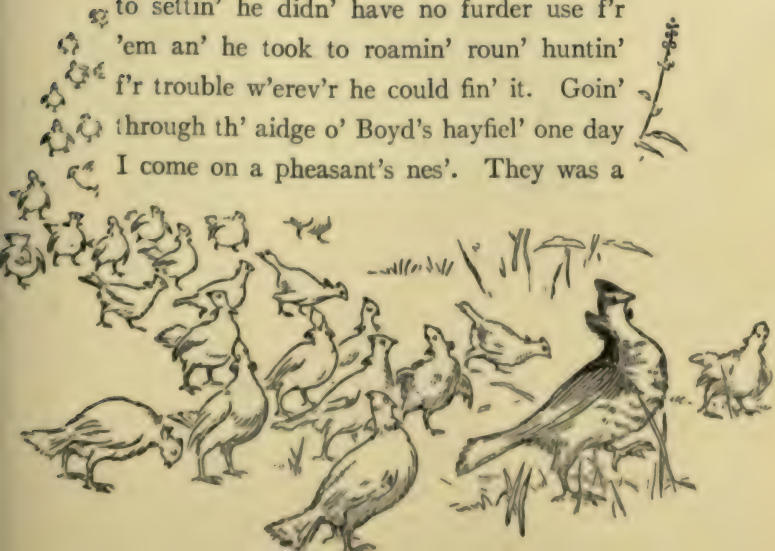
brought his beak down twicet, an' they was three poun' o' dead bird lyin' in th' middle o' th' glade an' mebbe a quarter poun' o' feathers floatin' on th' breeze. Th' hen she set still w'ile this were doin', but w'en it were ended she teetered fr'm side to side more lovesick'n ever an' she jus' couldn' git 'nough lookin' at th' big murd'rer w'at done th' ack. I says to him, I says:

" 'Balsam Bill, you're jus' as much of a scrapper as you useter be,' says I, an' says I to her: 'If so be it you ain't Tonette,' I says, 'you're her harf-sister,' says I, 'an' jus' as big a fool,' I says.

"Meanw'iles, th' drummin' an' challengin' had a-recommenced an' two hens sidles out'n th' bresh an' walks acrost th' glade. They didn' notice th' fus' one, but looked at th' big feller on th' log, lovesick. Then two cocks come an' he killed 'em both. He

drummed aw'ile longer, but no more he-pheasants showed up to be slaughtered, so he come down off'n his perch an' marched off inter th' woods, swellin' his ruff, flirtin' his tail, showin' his bes' pints all to onct an' makin' them hens daffy as las' year's bird-nests. I gathered up th' dead ones an' br'iled 'em that night an' they was better'n ef I'd walked all day f'r 'em. Two weeks arter-ward I meets him on a harf-acre prairie by th' wes' side o' th' lake an' I hope I may never see th' back o' my neck if he didn' have thirty-eight hens tailin' out behin' him like they belonged to him.

"Th' spring went on. W'en th' hens went to settin' he didn' have no furdur use f'r 'em an' he took to roamin' roun' huntin' f'r trouble w'erev'r he could fin' it. Goin' through th' aidge o' Boyd's hayfiel' one day I come on a pheasant's nes'. They was a



cute leetle hen settin' on it, an' near by, snoopin' roun' in the grass lookin' f'r grass-hoppers f'r to feed her with, was one o' th' leetles' an' purties' cocks I ever see. He didn' weigh much, but ev'y feather on him shined. He were th' busies' leetle critter in th' world, tendin' to his wife. I laid there f'r a arf-hour, 'cause I never did see nothin' to do me more good. Goin' back home I made up my min' that I'd take my gun with me an' if I saw Balsam Bill I'd plug him, f'r I knowed it'd be shore all day with th' leetle man an' his 'oman if th' big un got sight o' 'em.

"I didn' happen that way f'r a week agin, but w'en I come 'long I seen a ack I ain't never goin' to disremember. Th' little hen were settin' on th' nes' all right, all right, but th' cock were off some'rs in th' woods, foragin'. In his place were Balsam Bill.

He'd foun' th' happy home a few minits before I git there an' were doin' his ushul do. He'd prance 'roun' her, with his ruff out an' his wing-tips scrapin' th' groun', proud as a turkey-cock an' 'mos' as big. Then he'd strut 'way like he were goin' to leave her f'rever, but his heart 'd git sof' an' he'd come back. He danced on one laig an' then on th' yuther an' stuck out his bill and talked to her mos' lovin'.

"She set there cuddlin' her aigs, demure like, an' tendin' to bizness, but I think I see in her eye that Balsam's beginnin' to come th' cunjer over her jus' like he come it over th' yuther fifty. Then he played his las' card. He mounts on a stump clost by an' gives her his bes' drum. Say, he were a beauty with th' sunshine pourin' down on him through th' trees, his haid up, his eyes like blood an' his wings goin' like mad!

"That leetle hen jus' couldn' stan' it no longer. I see her raise fr'm off'n her aigs an' take two steps toward him—she were shore a goner—w'en, whir-r-r-r-r! her leetle man come shootin' through th' woods.

"He never 'tempted to 'light, but whirled over Balsam on th' stump like a shot f'om a cannon. He were 'bout a inch too high as he passed, but I heerd his spurs click together like knives. Hadn' been f'r that mislick th' big masher'd been cat meat right there. I says to myse'f, says I:

"'By th' pink-bellied frog o' Swamp Lake, you've got th' soul o' Willyum Jakes in you, whuther he's daid or not!'

"I nam'd him Willyum right then. He went twenty yards afore he could check hisse'f, then w'eeled an' come back, straight f'r a clear space by th' aidge o' the hay. My! but they were a ruction. Willyum

were light, but his wing spread give him a mighty purchis on th' groun' an' on th' a'r. I thought it were all over with him at fus', but in a minit ur so I see Balsam'd tackled th' bigges' contrack o' his life. Finerly Balsam los' his balance an' went on his back with his big laigs in th' a'r. Quicker'n a wink Willyum were jus' 'bove him. F'r th' las' time th' spurs clicked. They hit Balsam in each eye an' they went clean through his haid f'om side to side without touchin' each other. Willyum fluttered and tugged to git loose, but he couldn' an' shore he couldn' fly with all that meat hangin' to him. I went to him an' untangled him an' tossed him up. He flewed on'y a rod ur two an' lit on a branch.

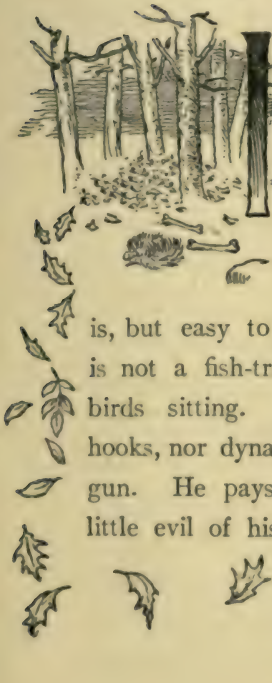
"Miss Hen, she'd went back to her nes', an' all through the fight she set there lookin' like she was too busy to think an' hadn'

never done nothin' wrong in her life. I b'lieve she got back on that nes' afore Willyum saw her, 'cause soon as I'd picked up Balsam an' hid he come back to her an' strutted 'roun' mos' proud an' prodijus. That daid villyun weighed nine poun' six ounces an' he weren't bad arter I took him off'n th' coals. He were se'fish, but that didn' hurt his flavor none."

It was high noon. The other man reeled in slowly, looked at his perished but unscarred frog, and waved his arm in silence toward camp. Fergy bent to the oars, still smiling. He spoke only once on the return.

"It don' pay nobody nur nothin' to be a hawg," he said.

FATAL GENTILITY OF THE FLYING-SQUIRREL



“It is hard,” said the other man, continuing a discussion begun on the lake and carried through luncheon and the first pipe, “it is hard to say just what a gentleman is, but easy to say what he is not. He is not a fish-trapper, nor a murderer of birds sitting. He does not use spring-hooks, nor dynamite for bass, nor a pump-gun. He pays his debts and speaks as little evil of his neighbor as possible, and treats women and children with tenderness. To quote

the Hon. Terence Mulvaney, of whom you never heard, Fergy, he is not hunting a fight 'wid ivry scutt,' but when he has to fight, he 'hits him on th' nose first an' frequent.' "

"You are a gen'l'm'n, are you?" asked the guide, looking at him critically.

"I try to be."

"Well, you quit it. It don' pay in th' woods. It's all right, o' course, so long's they's on'y you an' me in camp—I'm a hired hand an' you're th' man with th' money—but w'en they's more'n one 'long they ain' nothin' in it. Mebbe it pays in Noo Yawk—I dunno nothin' 'bout Noo Yawk—but out here it's ev'y man to his own log an' t' 'ell with him ef he cain' swing it."

A ripened acorn fell into the outer edge of the ashes and sent up a small feathery cloud. A hoarse, impudent, raucous chat-

ter followed it. Fergy glanced up with a grin. In an oak-tree near by a red fox-squirrel squatted, its tail over its back. Fergy made a slight motion with his hand as if to pick up something. In half a second the squirrel was on the other side of the tree-trunk, just a tip of its ear showing. A gray squirrel in a hickory barked appreciation of the episode. From the top of a tall hemlock fifty feet distant a small brownish object launched itself through space. Descending upon a long slope with great speed it struck the side of a maple lower down and twenty yards away and clung there. It was a tremendous leap, smoothly and securely made, and the other man watched it with interest.

"That's a flyin'-squirr'l," said Fergy. "Sometimes I thinks a man w'at don' push out his breas' as a gen'l'm'n an' don' swell

roun' as a tough, but jus' ten's to biznis quiet an' lets things go as they lays is got th' bes' show to git 'long. That flyin'-squirr'l, now, he's a gen'l'm'n. He tries to treat ev'ybody right. He don' hunt no trouble. He got th' cleanes' nes' you ever see. He purwides fur his wife an' leetle ones. He's hard-workin' an' sober. Ef he's got a fault it's th' fault o' not on'y bein' a gen'l'm'n, but wantin' all th' yuther an'muls to know it. He sorter insists on it.

"That fox-squirr'l is on th' yuther tack. He ain' no pretenshuns to bein' nothin' but a robber an' a fighter an' a thief an' mos' insultin' to ev'ying w'at comes roun'. He won' work. W'en winter comes he makes his livin' w'ippin' yuther squirr'ls out'n w'at they got. Ef he cain' ketch 'em to w'ip 'em, he speaks to 'em easy an' borrhers f'om 'em.

"One winter I were livin' in a shack over on Connor's Lake. Man named Valentine were there an' he were a hermit. Went there an' built th' shack an' wouldn' wear no shoes in th' snow an' ice. Said he wanted to cure th' rheumatiz. He cured th' rheumatiz all right an' got pneumony, an' I had to nuss him. They weren't nothin' f'r me to do 'cep' give him his food an' keep th' blankits on him. We didn' have no doctor, so he got well. I he'ped him 'long by sittin' outside th' door an' watchin' things; got \$3 a day f'r it.

"Th' shack were in a clump o' black walnuts, hick'ries an' oaks and you never see no place like that place f'r squirr'ls. Now, I wan' you to know that squirr'ls kin talk jus' well 's we kin an' they does heap o' it. Any man w'at's got years kin learn to un'erstan' 'em in a leetle w'ile, 'cause they

words is all small. They ain't allers talkin' 'bout egos an' cosmusses an' mental'ties, like some folks I knows. I got mos' wrapped up in a flyin'-squirr'l an' a gray squirr'l w't lived clost by. Th' flyin'-squirr'l's hole were in th' talles' hick'ry he could find. He useter go up to th' top an' make visits f'r a hunderd yards all roun'—ur mebbe a hunderd an' ten yards. The cat-squirr'l lived in a oak, 'bout forty foot f'om th' groun'. They were a knot in this limb an' th' smalles' hole in it I ever see a cat-squirr'l go inter. Clost to w'ere th' limb j'ined th' tree were nuther hole 'bout th' same size. Th' flyer useter go t' see th' cat e'vy mornin' reg'ler an' in th' arternoon th' cat 'd go to see th' flyer. They useter swap nuts an' gossip, an' in th' evenin', w'en th' sun were shinin' red an' level through th' trees, they'd sit out on th' limbs an' crack shell-barks an' trade lies.

"They weren't never no politer leeble beas' 'n that flyer. Long's he knowed th' cat, he'd never call it nothin' but mister. Ef he opened a nut he'd offer th' fus' arf an' th' bigges' arf to his fr'en'. Ef they started down a tree, th' cat'd have to go fus'. They were allers a lot o' ceremony 'bout meetin' in th' mornin' an' sayin' good-by in th' evenin'. Th' leeble feller were a gen'l'm'n, all right, but he put on too many a'rs 'bout it. My idee is that ef a man's a gen'l'm'n he don' have to say he's a gen'l'm'n, an' he don' have to say he tries to be a gen'l'm'n nuther; an' I useter git right ir'tated watchin' them two.

"One mornin' w'en they'd been confabbin' f'r a arf-hour 'bout how they piles o' nuts was gittin' on, an' wuther they had 'nough to las' 'em through th' winter, an' 'bout w'en th' break-up might be 'spected,

a big fox-squirr'l come sidlin' up to 'em. He were thin an' scraggly an' hadn' had 'nough t'eat. His fur were all twisted th' wrong way f'r Sunday, his tail had los' its curl an' hung down droopy, an' his right front foot were sore w'ere s'm'other fox had bit him. He stopt 'bout five feet f'om 'em, an' he says, says he:

“‘It's a fine day, gents! That were a great time I had las' night,' says he.

“The gray squirr'l aided off torrerd his hole right away; but the flyer were too polite to do nothin' like that. He had his reputashun as a gen'l'm'n to keep up, so he says politeful, says he:

“‘How's that, stranger?' ur 'Sir,' I disremember which.

“‘Oh,' says th' fox-squirr'l, 'jus' me an' some o' th' boys,' says he. ‘We had some sour ellum-juice an' maple-juice, an' we

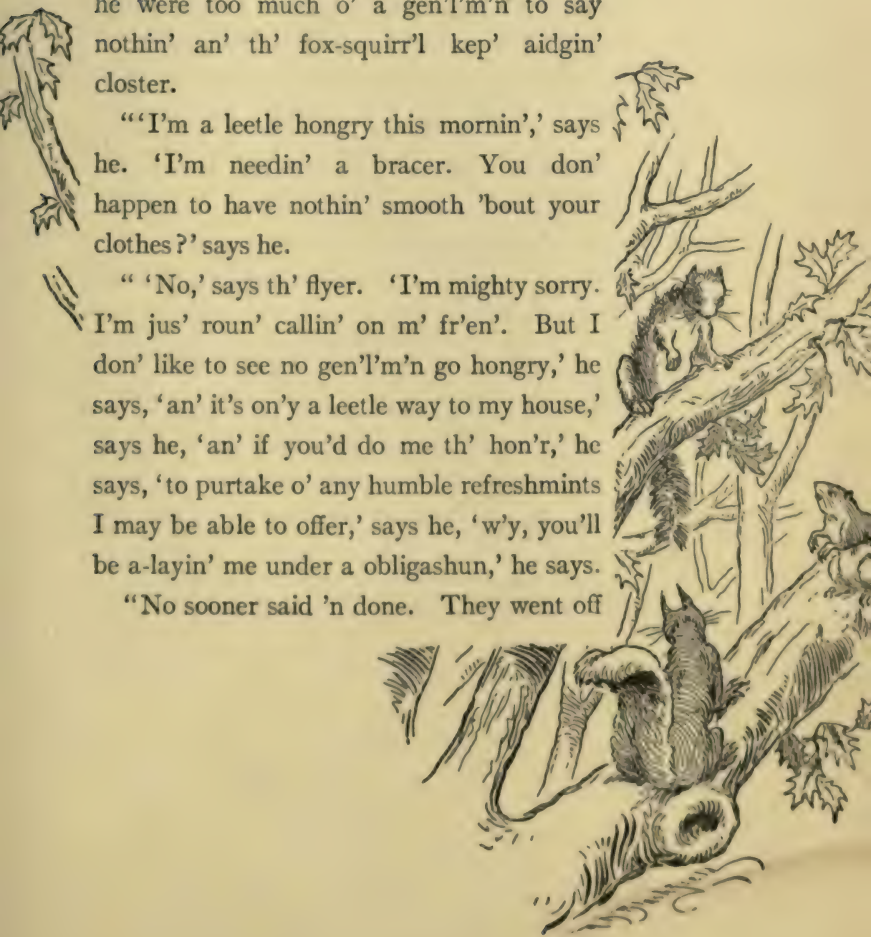
mixed 'em an' it stuck to th' ribs,' says he. 'We didn' do a thing but lif' th' bark off'n th' trees all roun' w'ere we was,' says he.

"Th' flyer seemed a leetle doubtful, but he were too much o' a gen'l'm'n to say nothin' an' th' fox-squirr'l kep' aidgin' closter.

" 'I'm a leetle hongry this mornin',' says he. 'I'm needin' a bracer. You don' happen to have nothin' smooth 'bout your clothes?' says he.

" 'No,' says th' flyer. 'I'm mighty sorry. I'm jus' roun' callin' on m' fr'en'. But I don' like to see no gen'l'm'n go hongry,' he says, 'an' it's on'y a leetle way to my house,' says he, 'an' if you'd do me th' hon'r,' he says, 'to purtake o' any humble refreshmints I may be able to offer,' says he, 'w'y, you'll be a-layin' me under a obligashun,' he says.

"No sooner said 'n done. They went off



to th' hick'ry-tree an' there th' flyer ladled out a hatful o' nuts an' f'om th' way th' shells flewed roun' you'd 'a' thort th' fox were a sassidge-grinder. Th' cat-squirr'l lookt on f'om his hole mighty sollum-like, but he were 'fraid t' say anythin'.

"F'om that time on th' fox an' th' flyer was together pretty constant. Th' fox 'd show up early in th' mornin' an' git his vittles. Then he an' th' flyer'd go visitin' roun' th' neighborhood. It were easy to see th' big tough were exercisin' strong infloence over th' leetle feller. He didn' c'rupt his manners none—that were onposs'ble—but he filled him so full o' tales 'bout th' doin's o' him an' his gang that he had him sorter charmed. Th' gray squirr'l didn' interfere a-tall. He knowed it were no use. You hitch a true-bo'n gen'l'm'n to a true-bo'n husky, an' w'ich gits th' worse o' it? That's

w'at I been tellin' you. They weren't but one outcome, an' I set there an' watched f'r it.

"Th' big feller got fat an' his foot healed up. Then he begin to boss things. Fus' out he chewed th' a'r 'bout th' qual'ty o' th' nuts. They was plenty o' 'em, such as they was, he said, but they wasn't up to th' stan'ard him an' his 'sociates 'd been 'customed to. Th' flyer 'polygized an' said he'd dig down inter his pile an' see ef he couln' bring up som'p'n' better. Th' fox-squirr'l grunted som'p'n' 'bout th' yuther one better 'tend to biznis an' 'polygies wasn't good to eat, an' then he squared hisse'f an' went through a poun' o' ch'ice nuts without movin' two inches f'om w'ere he were settin'.

"F'om then on tell th' bust-up they wern't nothin' good 'nough f'r th' fox ruffin. He got so fat an' lazy he hated to move, so he

got him a big hole in a maple not twenty yard f'om th' hick'ry tree an' had his meals brought to him. He'd stick his haid out 'bout sunup an' give three loud coughs an' th' flyer come a runnin' bringin' th' bigges' nut in his cashay, an' beggin' pardon f'r comin' so slow. He carried wattuh to th' big chap's hole. He cleaned it out f'r him. Onct the gray squirr'l int'ructed him an' says:

“‘W’at th’ Jim Hill you doin’ this fur?’ an’ th’ flyer he says, says he:

“‘He’s my gues’. I inwited him to dine. I’m free to say I didn’t expec’ him to stay to dinner all through th’ winter, but w’at can a gen’l’m’n say to a feller w’ats bruk his braid an’ eat his salt?’ he says. ‘His manners is not puffed, but we all has our faults. I, m’s’e’f,’ says he, ‘could wush I were more of a gen’l’m’n,’ he says.

“Th’ gray squirr’l give it up as a bad piece o’ timberin’ arter that.

“One evenin’ in Febwerry th’ red-bellied robber goes over to th’ flyin’-squirr’l’s tree an’ he says: ‘I coughed four times an’ you didn’ bring nothin’,’ he says, feroshus.

“Th’ flyer put his nose down atween his paws an’ bobbed his head up ’n’ down an’ he says in a ha’f-w’isper: ‘I regrets more’n I kin say, esteemed sir, as they ain’ nothin’ lef’. My humble larder is empty. It’s humil’atin’ f’r me to make this here confesshun, but my dooty to you as my gues’ an’ my dewoshun to my own stan’ard as a gen’l’m’n compels th’ statement,’ he says.

“The fox lookt at him a good minute an’ then he let out a yowl would a-made a wolf ashamed o’ hisse’f.

“‘W’at!’ he says. ‘W’at! W’at! All

gone! You mus' a set up nights an' et tell your jaws hurt,' says he.

"'No, sir,' says th' flyer. 'You do me wrong. I'd scorn to eat without fus' biddin' my gues' to th' feas',' says he. 'It's not th' part o' a gen'l'm'n to dine alone,' he says.

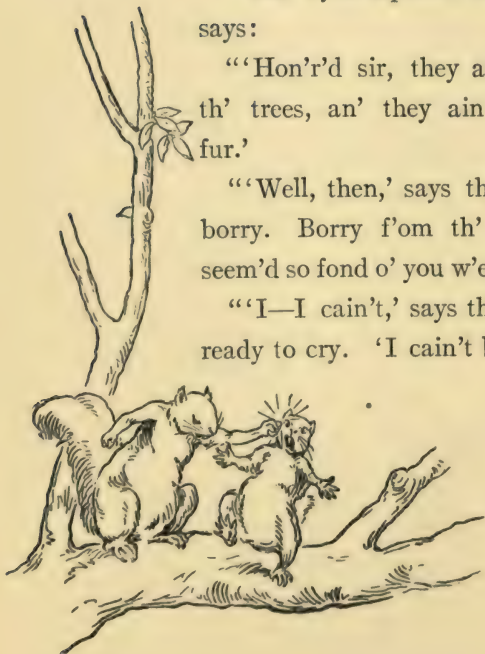
"'Well,' says th' big one, 'you're lyin' all right; they ain' no discount on that,' he says; 'but you jus' git out an' hustle an' hustle swif',' says he.

"'The flyin'-squirr'l bowed agin, an' he says:

"'Hon'r'd sir, they ain' no nuts lef' on th' trees, an' they ain' nothin' t' hustle fur.'

"'Well, then,' says th' big one, 'you go borry. Borry f'om th' gray sucker w'at seem'd so fond o' you w'en I come.'

"'I—I cain't,' says th' leetle flyer, 'mos' ready to cry. 'I cain't borry f'om nobody.



My blood turns cold w'en I think o' it,' he says.

"Th' fox-squirr'l sidled over torrers him tell he got close 'nough an' then he fetched him a wipe side th' haid w'at mos' took it off.

"'I'll warm up your col' blood,' he says. 'I'll het it up tell you'll think you done swallowed Injun turnip root,' says he. 'Git a borry on, an' git it fas'.'

"The flyin'-squirr'l picked hisse'f up an' ambled off to th' gray squirr'l an' axed f'r th' loan o' eight nuts.

"'I dunno w'en I kin pay you back, m' dear fr'en',' he says, 'but my gues' mus' be fed. I'll do th' bes' I kin.'

"Th' gray squirr'l thort hard f'r a minit, an' then he says:

"'You're my fr'en' all right an' I'm willin' t' obleege you, but th' fac' is I'm runnin'

a leetle short myse'f. I kin let you have four,' he says, 'purwidin' you'll pay me nex' Monday; but don' come agin,' he says, 'f'r I hates to turn you down.'

"The flyin'-squirr'l took th' nuts an' went back an' th' fox feller et 'em an' went to sleep. W'en he waked up he lookt roun' an' didn' see no nuts. Th' flyin'-squirr'l were in his hole w'ere he couldn' be got at. Th' fox feller coughed loud, but nobody come. He kep' on coughin' an' nobody come. I thort he'd jerk his haid off.

"Then he pondered a w'ile. Then he clomb up to th' flyin'-squirr'l's hole an' he said:

"'It's all right, ol' fel'. I hadn' orter struck you. I didn't mean it. I were jus' goin' through my exercise. I'm willin' to say I'm sorry. No feller kin say no fairer nur that. I'm sorry an' wanter shake han's.

I 'polygize clear down to th' groun'. I'm your fr'en' to beat th' ban'.'

"Th' leetle feller come out an' he says:

"'W'en a man 'polygizes that closes th' matter. Furgit it! Don' let it trouble you none. I re'lize it were a accidunt.'

"The red feller says: 'I'm a leetle hongry. Ain' they no way we kin git to th' nuts in reckerd time?' he says. The flyin' one says: 'I dunno no way.'

"Th' big one 'd got atween him an' th' tronk by this time an' he says:

"'W'at! W'at! You don' know no way. Hustle! Borry! Biff!'

"Th' leetle feller went to th' groun' a hunderd an' sixty-two feet. He tried to spread his wings, but he was bad hurted an' they wouldn' work. He hit on his haid an' lay there, limber. The big one come chargin' down th' tree, rushed over to him,

an' sunk his cutters in his th'oat. The leetle feller kicked jus' once, an' that ended him. The killer begin to hop up an' down and squawk, he were so mad. He see as he'd not on'y kilt th' one w'at had been his fr'en', but he'd also kilt th' one who'd been feedin' him. It were hard to tell f'om his lang-widge wuther he were more mad at th' flyin-squirr'l ur at hisse'f.

"I heerd th' dry branches, stiff in th' fros', begin to crackle f'r a quarter mile 'roun' there. Then come a long mad chatter f'om over by th' tree w'ere th' gray squirr'l had his home. Then I see 'em comin' in ev'y direcshun in dozens, an' ev'y one o' 'em gray. I seen this onct before w'en a mink kilt a squirr'l an' I knowed I were in f'r a sight. Them leetle gray fellers swarmed down f'om th' branches an' 'fore th' red one knowed w'ere he were at they was a wide

ring 'roun him. He humped his back an' stared at 'em an' showed his teeth, but it weren't no good. They was a short, sharp bark as a signal, an' they piled on him. Say, they was a heap o' gray squirr'ls five foot high an' six foot thick at th' base. They squirmed an' twisted an' snapped f'r five minits ur so. Then they sep'rated an' all scampered back to th' trees an' set roun' an' talked 'bout it. On th' groun' w'ere th' red feller 'd been were on'y four inches o' tail an' some bones. The body o' th' flyer were buried in th' leaves w'at were humped up in some places a yard deep.

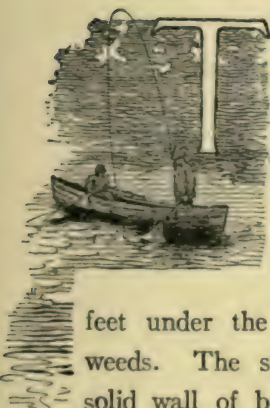
"W'en they went 'way I see th' gray squirr'l, w'at had been th' leetle flyer's frien', go over to th' hick'ry an' climb up to th' hole an come out with a lot o' moss an' chips. He took 'em to his own home, w'ere they'd he'p to keep him warm. One

o' his tribe called to him as he went by an' says, says he:

“‘W’at’s th’ meanin’ o’ that? Cain’t you let him git col’ ’fore you walk in an’ begin to take his beddin’?’ he says.

“Th’ yuther stopped a minute, an’ he says: ‘He owed me four nuts, an’ he were too much o’ a gen’l’m’n not to want to pay up promp’, even if he’s daid,’ he says, an’ then he went on.”

THE CHASE OF THE DOUBLE DEER



THE small clinker-built boat floated near the south end of Pickerel Lake and twenty yards from the west shore. A line of tangled lily-pads ran out to meet it and ten feet under the surface grew masses of weeds. The sun was setting behind the solid wall of balsam pines, hemlocks, and spruce-trees and all the lake was under a blue-tinged shadow. A bass hole had been found. The other man sat in the stern, a frog-bucket between his knees. As he was hooking, fighting, and detaching

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his own fish, putting on the frogs for himself and in all ways dispensing with the services of the guide, Fergy rested on his oars. There being not a breath of wind, the boat remained nearly stationary. It was turned here and there by the racing of the four-pound bass against the strain of the rod and line, but kept pretty much to one position. Fergy looked on philosophically, not speaking a word of encouragement when some unusually game fighter was lifted in nor uttering one of blame when a bass leaped three feet in air, obtained a little slack, and shook the hook free from its mouth. Finally he allowed the oars to hang idly in the water, reached into one pocket and abstracted a corn-cob pipe blackened with age and usage, from another pocket took a handful of tobacco which looked like dried yellow moss, struck a match, drew in a deep in-

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spiration, and poisoned the air. Round about the little craft floated a smell composed of burning straw, hair from old mattresses, horn buttons, and something indistinguishable. The other man, being used to it, went on fishing.

"That's genuine," said Fergy in reference to the tobacco. "Some fellers puts it up in Milwaukee. It's good ol', sweet ol' Wisconsin terbacker an' it costs, laid down at Fifiel' 30 cents a poun'. You smoke some of it an' you won't never smoke nothin' else."

The other man, reeling steadily in on a three-pound fish, remarked briefly: "I believe you. It would kill at this distance if I didn't have a bad cold."

"Yass," said Fergy, "you gotter be a man to smoke this here, but w'en you gits to be a man an' tries it, it's good. One time a St. Looley feller come up to Feely's. He

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had a valise full o' St. Looney seegyars an' a trunk full o' bottled beer. He dranked th' beer all day an' w'en harf o' it was gone he went up-stairs to bed. It was arter 11 o'clock at night. I slep' down in th' guide-house, eight rod away, an' bimeby I begin to dream 'bout a glue fact'ry I seen onct in Canady. Th' glue fact'ry were on fire an' I'd jus' climbed up nine ladders an' reskied a red-headed gal I useter know, w'en I hear 'Fire! Fire!' an' nex' minit I'm up to th' hotel ready to do biznis.

"In front is the feller f'om St. Looney, barefooted an' wearin' a pair o' pyjammys, ol' man Feely in a nightshirt ripped half off'n him, four servint gals in curl-papers screamin' like a loon with a musky a-holt o' his flipper an' out in th' yard, lyin' on th' groun', a long, crooked black thing with fire on th' eend o' it that smelt—Lord, Lord,

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how it smelt! It was one o' them St. Looney seegyars. Th' feller'd got into bed 'bout 12, arter knockin' the souls out'n four more bottles, an' lit th' stinkydoory. Ol' man Feely, thinkin' th' house was afire an' trailin' th' scent to this feller's room, had a-knocked on th' door an' a-lammed on th' door, an' finerly kicked th' door in. Th' St. Looney chap, w'at were good an' beery by that time, grabbed him w'en he broke in an' it was they two to th' floor. They rolled down-stairs together an' out on th' front gallery, w'ere Feely, shoutin' Gaelic, had a-choked th' seegyar out'n his foeman's mouth an' chucked it away. It was th' servint gals as did th' 'Fire!' hollerin'. Say, I hadder laugh. Nex' day Feely took the beer away f'om th' feller an' drunk it hisself to keep it f'om doin' any more harm, an' he tol' th' feller to smoke guides's ter-

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backer ur walk twenty-two miles into Fifiel' an' take th' fust south-boun' freight w'at come along. He lef' there ten days arterward, smokin' this sort o' terbacker an' feelin' fine. I guess he's smokin' it yet. We buried th' box o' seegyars whole."

The other man, his thoughts apparently a thousand miles away, fixed the single hook behind his No. 6 spoon through the lips of a large green frog and, with a quick sway of the steel rod, sent it hurtling forty feet away. It struck the water with a splash close to a single pad that grew far out from its fellows. At the instant a muskallonge of fifteen pounds sprang savagely upward, rolled heavily over the frog, and disappeared.

"Damn him!" said Fergy apathetically. "He didn' have no idee of snatchin' that frog. He jus' wants to skeer 'way all o' th'

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bass. I'd like to shoot him with a 10-gauge shotgun loaded with rusty nail-heads."

The other man reeled in swiftly, the crank of the quadruple-multiplying fairly jerking the bait through the still water, and cast again in another direction. A large-mouthed bass struck instantly and the line began to sing, while the slender rod-tip bent to the surface and dipped under. The fish captured; the other man lit a cigar and idly examined his bait to see the damage done to its tender flesh by the teeth of the captive.

On the far edge of the lake, a half-mile away, three brown spots showed suddenly. Instantly the guide became interested and pointed them out to his companion. The other man sat with the frog held loosely in his fingers and gazed. A doe and two half-grown fawns had come down for the sunset drink, a meal on the lily-pads, and a half-

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hour of play in the twilight. Too far away to fear danger they shot along the water's edge; the fawns, easily outstripping the mother, leaped high in succession and came down belly-deep in the clear lake, browsed awhile, then raced madly in circles, springing the one over the other, pretending to fall, springing up again with the rapidity of lightning, indulging in a thousand graceful antics, wild, unfettered, instinct with the joy of living. The fish were forgotten by the human pair, but it was Fergy who broke the spell. No sight or sound of nature could keep him silent for long.

"They's a-many deer in this country," he began softly, "but they's jus' ord'nary deer like them yonder. Mos' times one deer is like ernuther, but now an' then you run acrost one out o' th' common. Ten year ago, w'en no fores' fires had been through

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here an' th' woods was a heap thicker'n an' greener'n w'at they be now, there were a deer used roun' Letourneau Lake as were a wonder. Nobody knowed w'ere he come f'om, ur jus' w'en he come. I weren't guidin' then but was helpin' to make hay f'r a Frenchmun named Salge.

"Th' fus' we knowed o' this deer was findin' a harf-acre o' young corn chewed up an' bruk down an' trampled. They weren't no gap in th' fence an' th' fence were eight foot six inches high. We foun' th' spot w'ere th' deer had went over it without touchin' a hair. They was ten acre o' corn in that fiel', but in a month it weren't wuth gatherin'. I never see anythin' so destructive as that deer. He'd jump th' fence in th' night somew'ere an' somehow, fill his belly, an' then go to kickin' an' stampin' 'roun' mos' prodeejus. We laid f'r him ten

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nights, off an' on, but th' nights we laid f'r him was the nights he weren't there. I never hear o' any deer with as much sense as that deer had. We could fin' his trail all 'roun' th' lake, an' he made a track as big as a horse, but we couldn' set eyes on him. We didn' hunt f'r him reg'lar, but one ur 'nuther o' us took turns givin' him a wrassle f'r a half hour ur so ev'ry day, but 'twan't no use.

"Finerly, ol' Salge, whose daddy useter be a trapper on th' South Fork o' th' Flambeau 'way back in th' fifties, said th' way to git that an'mul was to jack him.

"Salge he said: 'Zat deer ees hell on corn, but he mus' drink some time, *mon br-rave*. He mus' go to ze lak fo' hees watter w'en ze moon ees gone down. Tek ze canoe an' ze 'eadlight, ze paddle an ze gon, Fairguson, *mon br-r-rave*, an' blow ze hohn off'n 'eem!'

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"Ol' Salge he knowed I were the bes' jacker w'at ever w'ipped a bar-keep in Fifiel', an' I said to myself, I said, that th' deer's name were dogfish.

"I git out on th' lake at 1 o'clock that mornin'—ur mebbe it were 1.15—an' paddle slow 'roun' th' aidge. I don' make no more noise as a young teal swimmin'. I got th' jack on th' front o' my hat an' th' shotgun w'ere I c'n git at it without trouble. I go nearly 'roun' Letourneau an' I don' see nothin'. At las', jus' as I paddle 'roun' a leetle p'int o' trees that run out inter th' water, I see two big roun' eyes blazin' like stars not twenty yard away. Mebbe they weren't more'n nineteen yard. They was a good five feet six inches above the lake, and I says to myself either that deer is standin' on a log ur he is th' bigges' thing that ever



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hit th' North Woods. He stares at me, an' I stares at him, an' then I notice that two feet lower down an' a yard away is two more eyes.

“‘Er-huh,’ I says to m’s’e’f, ‘you got a fr’en’ with you,’ I says. I reached f’r th’ gun, an’ as I reached f’r it they was a splash like a house tumbled inter th’ water an’ then a crash on th’ bank like eleven trees had fell an’ the eyes was gone. I was so mad I jus’ raised th’ gun an’ let loose both barrels to onct an’ that turned the canoe over in twenty-three feet o’ water an’ I los’ th’ gun. W’en I git back to camp ol’ Salge is up waitin’ to arsk me w’ether I git him. I tell him ’bout th’ gun an’ he do a Chippewa corn-dance and say th’ gun comes out’n my wages. Then I do a Leech Injun walk-eroun’ an’ tell him no French cigreet-smoker ever pupped c’n dock me f’r a cent. Then he say it ain’ my fault an’ we go to bed. See?’”

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The other man, swearing softly because he had lost three frogs in rapid succession, said that he saw and Fergy resumed:

"Then we still hunt that deer. This was in August. You couldn' hear yourself think f'r th' hummin' o' th' skeeters. Th' leaves on th' trees was so thick it were more'n a human bein' could do to breathe 'mong 'em. Th' groun' were soggy under foot f'om th' rains an' climbin' over a rotten loti made you feel wuss'n fallin' fifty trees a day in th' winter. There were th' trail plain marked ev'ry day 'roun' th' lake, an' now it gotter be so that they was two trails. Everdently th' fr'en' o' th' big buck were stayin' with him. Still, huntin' him was like huntin' f'r a cartridge cap in a box-car o' basswood shavin's. I don't misdoubt that we was within fifty yards o' him twenty times that month, but we never see him.

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He useter lead us roun' an' roun' an' roun'
an' roun', so's we'd cover twenty mile before
dinner an' never be three mile f'om th' lake.
Then, w'en we'd give it up f'r th' day, we'd
heer a snort somers near us an' th' double
crash o' two som'p'n's jumpin' inter th'
bush, an' that'd eend it. Ol' Salge were one
o' these red-face, w'ite-mustash Frenchmun
w'ats obst'nit as pigs, an' he let th' hay an'
th' corn an' ev'ything else go to thunder
w'ile him an' th' hay han's chased th' buck.
They was fifteen o' us an' I calkerlated on
th' fust o' September we'd walked all ter-
gether 9,121 miles an' eight rod. But we
never git no buck.

"We bruk camp an' went inter Fifiel'
near th' eend o' September an' I lay 'roun'
there an' spen' my good money. I cain' git
that deer out'n my haid, an' I cain' git
'nough wood alkyhol inter me ter make me

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fergit that I like ter had him that night on th' lake. In October th' leaves turn red an' fall off, makin' th' woods clear, an' to'rd November th' fust light snow come down. Then McWhirter lopes inter town. McWhirter's a Scotchmun f'om a loggin'-camp over on Big Beaver. He cain't shoot much, but he's got a pair o' laigs on him like fishin'-poles, an' he's good f'r sixty mile a day seven days in a week. It's his biznis to be tel'fone 'tween loggin'-camps twenty mile apart, an' they never were a Injun runner atween the Mississip' an' Lake Michigan as could touch him f'r eatin' up th' groun'. He's had a row an' w'ipped th' camp cook 'cause th' grub weren't up to contrac', an' he's quit. I says to him we gotter git that deer, an' he says to me how much money I got, an' I says to him, nearly \$8; an' he says to me, it's too much; an' we drink up

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\$2 of it. Nex' mornin', with some grub an' lickin' an' blankets an' our guns, we hit th' woods f'r Letourneau Lake, sixteen mile wes', an' w'en we hit 'em you could 'a' heerd us hum. I useter be lumber-camp tel'fone m'se'f.

"We been on Letourneau Lake three weeks before we strike th' trail. I dunno w're th' buck were, but he weren't there. Meantime th' snow'd come down more'n a foot deep, the lake'd froze over, an' we ketched lots o' fish out'n a hole in th' ice. W'en we fin' th' trail we foller it aw'ile jus' to see that it run 'bout in th' lake neighborhood. We know'd then as th' buck'd be up to his ol' tricks an' we know'd we had him. This McWhirter was shore a smart Scotchmun. He couldn' shoot none, but he was shore smart. He says to me:

"'That buck is back on his ol' stompin-

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groun's an' he's goin' to hang roun' here all winter. He's got his partner with him, as we see by th' double trail. You couldn' drive him away f'om Letourneau Lake with a axe,' he says. 'I'll take him f'r twelve hours an' w'en I qui thim he won' be three mile f'om this camp,' he says. 'Then you take him f'r twelve hours. The snow's deep,' he says, 'an' th' buck's big as a moose,' says he, 'an' he'll break through th' crust an' bleed like a beef,' he says, 'an' ef you're arf's good as you useter be,' says he, 'we'll git him shore.'

"Then I says I'm good to trot th' laigs off'n any bloomin' Scotchmun as ever squeezed a dollar until th' eagle th'owed fits, says I, an' we git out th' snow-shoes. McWhirter he gits up at daylight next mornin' an' he takes a blankit an' a hunk o' bread an' fried fish an' no gun an' he hikes.

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I stay in camp all day an' cook grub an' ketch fish through th' ice an' 'bout a hour by sun I straps on my shoes an' starts out f'r th' trail. I hit it a mile an' two hunderd yards f'om camp, an' a arf-mile further on I come up to McWhirter, eat'n' his last piece o' bread an' fish an' hikin'. He says to me he done eighty-six miles an' a quarter, an' I says to him to git back to camp, w'ere he can lie to hissself in comfort, an' to give a shore-nough camp tel'fone a chanst.

"I foller that trail all night. It were dark f'r aw'ile, leastwise as dark as it ever gets to be over solid snow, but bimeby th' moon come up an' I keep Mr. Buck hustlin'. There never were no deer like that deer. 'Bout daylight I take a good look at th' trail an' I cain' see as his stride is any more raggeder 'n it were, an' the shorter trail long side o' his'n seems 'bout like it were

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sixty-three miles an' two rods w'en McWhirter come to me a little arter sunrise, an' go back to camp. All this time th' buck's been travellin' in a succle 'bout five miles wide an' in this part o' th' country th' snow ain' so deep. It seemed to have falled a little lighter roun' there. I go out to th' trail agin at sundown an' McWhirter, 'bout four mile f'om camp, is lookin' fagged. He's full o' fish an' bread, howsomever, an' he says to me he thinks th' two deer is gettin' ready to break away to th' wes'. Luckily I bring my gun with me an' I tell him to go back to camp an' be good, f'r I'm goin' to foller 'em ef they makes f'r th' Paccetic Oshun.

"A arf-hour arter I took it th' trail switched a little an' started as straight wes' as you could draw a line. Same time th' stride o' th' deer got longer an' I slid on

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them snow-shoes like I was gittin' a dollar a slide. Arter midnight the moon come up an' made th' black woods as light as day. Torrerd's mornin' th' snow got deeper an' th' big buck begin to go 'way down w'en he bruk through th' crust. A little later some o' his tracks showed a rim o' red 'roun' th' holes. He was bleedin' f'om a cut. I couldn' say that th' stride were growin' shorter, but long 'bout 8 in th' mornin' I see w'ere th' smalles' deer had laid down for a leetle w'ile. Then I know'd I had one o' 'em shore. I swung out on th' shoes for all I was wuth an' it'd done you good to hear me swooshin' 'long.

"At 9 o'clock I was mor'n fifty mile f'om camp in th' thickes' woods you ever heer of. Three times th' leetles' deer had laid down, an' I says to myself, I says, it's time f'r me to go slow an' look a little out.

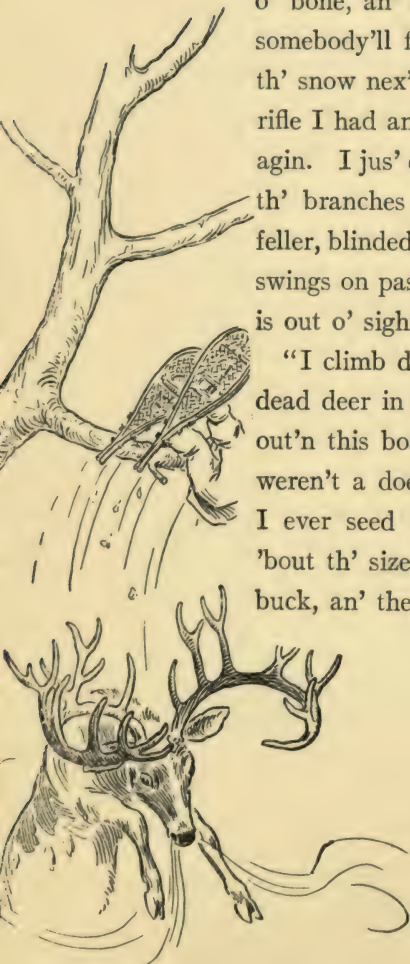
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Finerly I come to th' edge o' a holler mos' thirty foot deep, a hunderd yard wide, an' runnin' 'way to th' wes', I cain' tell how fur. I work 'long th' side o' it f'r twenty rod or so an' then, peekin' through the tree-trunks, I see in the middle th' leetles' deer down in th' snow, an' it cain' git up. I see a small pair o' horns stickin' up f'om its haid and I say to myself it's a young buck, son o' th' ol' man. Th' ol' man's standin' three hunderd yard funder off an' lookin' straight at me. Th' sun shines on his sides an' they's dappled in black spots, mos' beautiful. He had th' fines' set o' horns as ever tore through th' No'th Woods an' he held 'em up high, proud an' scornful-like. I takes careful aim at th' leetles' deer down in th' snow an' I plugs him straight through th' neck. He gives a quiver ur two an' that was all.

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“At th’ crack o’ th’ gun I looks through th’ smoke an’ I see the big dappled feller chargin’ me, like a bull-moose. His horns is down an’ they looks like a tree-top made o’ bone, an’ I knows if they git inter me somebody’ll fin’ my clothes an’ hair under th’ snow nex’ spring. ’Twere a single-shot rifle I had an’ they weren’t no time to load agin. I jus’ drop th’ gun an’ swing up inter th’ branches o’ a tree. Th’ big dappled feller, blinded by snow ur crazy ur som’p’n’, swings on past me, an’ in five seconds more is out o’ sight, goin’ due eas’.

“I climb down arter aw’ile an’ go to th’ dead deer in th’ holler. I hope I may fall out’n this boat an’ be eat by muskies if it weren’t a doe—a horned doe, th’ only one I ever seed ur heerd of. Th’ horns was ’bout th’ size o’ th’ horns o’ a two-year-ol’ buck, an’ they growed straight up f’om th’



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eyes. This doe were as big as any buck I ever see, but she seemed leetle w'en sized up with th' other one. I skinned her and tuk her head and started back to camp.

"McWhirter an' me never see th' trail o' th' dappled buck any more. We staid roun' Letourneau f'r a month, but they weren't no sign o' him. We calkerlated that he mus' a-kep' on goin'. Nex' March, howsomever, I happened to be fallin' timber near th' big holler an' som'p'n' drewed me to th' place w'ere I killed th' leetles' deer. Th' bones was there. They was still two feet o' snow on th' groun' and stickin' out'n it, fifty yard away, were a thing I took f'r a dead bush. I went up to it, I dunno w'y, an' there lay th' dappled buck daid. They weren't no wound on him, but he were mighty thin an' I knowed he'd hung

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roun' there tell he starved to death. Th' wolves hadn' bothered his carcass; the porkypines hadn' et his horns; I dunno w'y. I tuk th' horns to Fifiel' an' hung 'em up behin' Champagne's bar. They was forty-two p'int on 'em. The skin I give to Rose Lachelle, up Ashlan' way, an' she made a floor-rug out'n it.

"I might," Fergy added reflectively, "'a' gone back to th' holler w'ile th' Scotchman an' me was camped an' shot that buck w'ile he was loafin' roun' th' dead doe if I'd 'a' had any sense, but I didn't have none."

The boat swung round and started for the shack at the north end of the lake. The other man, silent for a while, remarked slowly: "Your mentality is somewhat dappled."

"Yass," said Fergy, taking the assertion

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as a compliment, "an' I shore laid it onter that tel'fone McWhirter. I covered a hundred an' sixteen mile ten rod on that last trail."

A ROBBED MOTHER AND HER VENGEANCE



GAZING anxiously into a bit of broken looking-glass stuck into the low fork of a tree, and dragging a razor that might have seen better days, Fergy was mowing the

hairs from his leathery chin. It was his intention to go to the hotel, eight miles away, for fresh supplies, and he wanted to be neat before the young women who would be grouped in the front gallery when he came in. They would make inquiries as to the catch of his companion and himself. It would be his duty

to lie prodigiously, and he wished to do it in style. The other man, squatted before the fire, took the last side of bass from the pan and ate it. Fergy watched him for a moment, made a final swipe with the razor, looked from blinking eyes at him and said:

"Notice you've got the last fish in the pan. Never occurred to you, did it, that I hadn' had more'n 'arf o' tha' catch? They's jus' two places in th' worl' w'ere you kin find out w'at's in a man in less'n two days: One's on a lumber schooner beatin' 'long th' coasts o' Lake Superior an' th' other's in camp. If a man's got a yellor streak in him, an' you ketch him in one o' them two places, th' yellor'll show. I been in camp with you a long time."

"Yep," said the other man, pouring himself some more coffee.

"Th' feller ur th' an'mul w'at's allers

after th' bes' o' it gits th' wors' o' it in th' long run," Fergy continued, running a broken-toothed comb through his wet, black hair. "That don' never fail. One spring a feller come down to Fifiel' f'om Ashlan' way, an' he says to me, says he: 'I'm Pres'dunt o' th' All-Heart Lumber Comp'ny,' says he. 'We done bought 4,000 acres o' lan' on Round Lake,' he says, 'an' we wanter hire you to go out there an' mark trees f'r fallin',' he says. 'I heerd as you were a expert lumberman an' tree-marker,' says he, an' I says: 'I be.' He says to me: 'You go out there an' camp an' mark trees an' I'll pay all expenses an' \$3 a day,' says he, an' I says: 'You're th' kind o' man I been dreamin' 'bout.' He says: 'I'll pay you 'arf right now,' he says, right off th' reel, jus' like that; an' I says, says I: 'My dream's come true.' Well, to make a short

story long, he gimme a bundle o' money twicet as big as that las' feesh you et. I knowed they weren't no good timber at Roun' Lake, but I took th' job, seein' a easy time ahead.

"It were good out in camp. W'en I got there th' las' sliver o' ice had melted an' th' lily-pads was gittin' ready to show yellor flowers. All th' trees was buddin' an' th' balsams smelt better'n a bottle o' parfume I bought onct, an' it were branded 'Love's Sweet Song.' Th' sky were blue all th' time an' they were jus' 'nough win' on th' wattuh to make th' rushes rub t'gether an' w'isper. More'n onct, w'en loafin' roun', I seen a big musky come to th' top, an' make a swirl jus' to tell me he were glad th' winter were gone. I made a bluff at huntin' trees to fall, an' res' o' th' time, I cooked an' et an' slep'. But wanderin' 'bout th' woods

lookin' f'r trees w'at would make three cuts to th' tronk, when I knowed they weren't no such trees, got to be sorter raspin' on my narves at last.

"I were sittin' humped up an' mopey one mornin' w'en I heerd a rustle o' wings an' lookin' up I see two wood-ducks go by like a railroad train with a drunk fireman an' a crazy engineer. If you ever saw a wood-duck you know w'at that sight were, with th' bright sun shinin' on 'em an' every feather showin' as clear as a di'mun' an' polished like a new gunbarril. Th' drake were leadin' her 'bout two yard, but she helt him steady at that an' th' hum o' 'em were like th' buzz o' a French gal's spinnin'-w'eel in a *habitan's* village. It sorter cheered me an' I set here tell they come back. Nex' mornin' th' same thing happed, with me sittin' on th' same log. They come a leetle

closter to me this time an' in a week they was hummin' by within a yard o' me. I could hear 'em talkin' plain an' th' talk were allers 'bout th' nes' back in th' woods, an' th' number o' aigs, an' w'at they was goin' to do with th' youngsters, an' s'forth an' s'on.

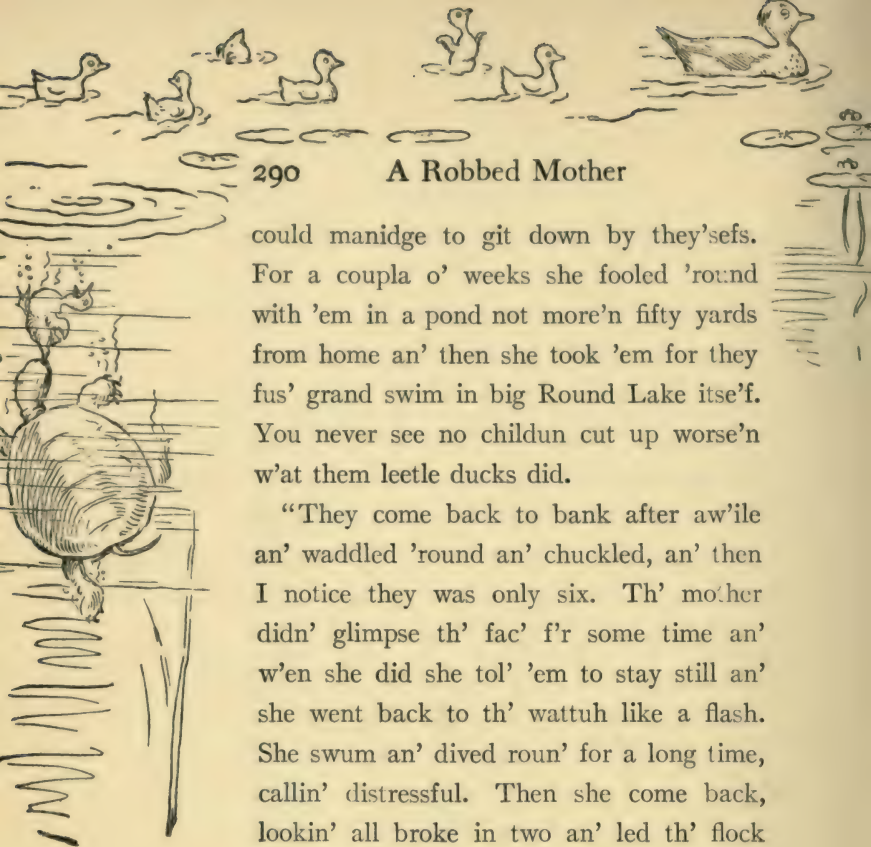
"Gittin' int'rested in them ducks led me to findin' they nes'. I struck a line on th' flight an' follered it up till I see 'em light in a big maple w'at stood three mile an' six rod back from th' south eend o' th' lake. Visitin' 'em w'en they wasn' at home were easy. I took off my shoes to keep from markin' th' bark, because wood-ducks is dretful narvous, an' I shinned up th' tree an' looked at th' nes'. They was seven aigs in it, an' knowin' wood-ducks, I knowed th' ol' man were gittin' 'bout ready to skip. I never knowed no wood-

drake to stay after th' litter o' aigs was laid.

"I go back t' th' maple-tree four days later an' sho'r enough th' ol' lady's settin' there sorter patient, with her bill buried in her breas' feathers, keepin' th' aigs warm an' 'fraid to say nothin' f'r fear all th' ducklin's 'll come out'n th' shells full-jawed hens. I notice wood-hens has a great contempt for they husbands an' tells 'em so frequent, but w'en it comes to hatchin' they wants all th' drakes they kin git. In a leetle w'ile th' aigs was pipped, an' shortly after that seven leetle yellow balls o' fur was peepin' they haid up an' squawkin' f'r grub. Then Miss Widder she shore got busy. She went backerd an' forrerd atween th' maple-tree an' th' lake so off'n an' so fast I could almos' see her trail in th' a'r. Finerly th' ol' gal

got ready to give her childun they fus swim.

“Don’ you never b’le’ve no nat’ralis’ crank, w’at reads books for his knowledge an’ tells you wood-ducks carries they young to wattuh. That’s like this yuther lie ’bout wood-cocks huggin’ they fam’lies atween they thighs an’ crossin’ th’ oshun four times a year to show they kin do it. A wood-hen gits her folks down one at a time. She picks a leetle un up in her bill an’ drops down easy to th’ foot o’ th’ tree. W’en she gits there she gives it a easy peck tellin’ it to stay still till mommer comes back, an’ then she flies up f’r ’nother one. W’en they’re all down she leads th’ flock to wattuh jus’ like any other duck w’at builds its nes’ on dry lan’. I see this wood-hen do this ack f’r a week, never missin’ a mornin’, an’ by that time th’ leetle fellers



could manidge to git down by they'sefs. For a coupla o' weeks she fooled 'round with 'em in a pond not more'n fifty yards from home an' then she took 'em for they fus' grand swim in big Round Lake itse'f. You never see no childun cut up worse'n w'at them leetle ducks did.

"They come back to bank after aw'ile an' waddled 'round an' chuckled, an' then I notice they was only six. Th' mo'her didn' glimpse th' fac' f'r some time an' w'en she did she tol' 'em to stay still an' she went back to th' wattuh like a flash. She swum an' dived roun' for a long time, callin' distressful. Then she come back, lookin' all broke in two an' led th' flock home. In two days 'nother one o' th' ducklin's went an' th' poor ol' mother had 'nother cirkiss with herse'f. Nex' day one more turned up missin' an' by th' eend o'

th' week they was on'y two o' 'em. Seemed to me like she would a took 'em to s'm'other piece o' wattuh, but mebbe she didn' have sense 'nough an' mebbe she hung 'roun' lookin' for her los' darlin's. On th' follerin' Sunday she got back to lan' with on'y one.

"Monday mornin' I waited till th' widder an' her las' ewe-lam' was cavortin' on th' wattuh, an' then I got inter my birch-bark an' follered 'em forty rod behin'. They swum 'long, th' leetle one refusin' to stay by her, an' she doin' her best to keep a eye on it. A wood-duck, howsomever, ain' got but two eyes, an' both o' them ain' on one side o' her haid, an' she couldn' keep her child in view more'n 'arf th' time. They worked 'roun' till they got within two yard o' a growth o' pads w'at had some rotten limbs in it. Then I see for harf a secon' a long, black haid, like a snake's, shoot up

an' shoot down ag'n, an' when it went down th' las' ducklin' went with it. Th' thing were done so easy an' so quick, without a splash ur a ripple, that th' mother didn' know her las' one were gone till she looked 'bout an' foun' only blank wattuh starin' her in th' face. I knowed, o' course, as how it were a hard-shell turtle w'at was feedin' his innards, but she didn'. She acted diff'runt this time, though. All o' her brood bein' took 'peared to sort o' still her. She didn' make no outcry, jus' swum 'roun' a leetle w'ile an' then flewed away. I said to myse'f: 'Trouble ahead f'r th' turtle.'

"Nex' day in th' arternoon I heerd th' soun' o' her wings an' see her comin' through th' woods at not more'n harf speed. I never hear a duck fly so sof'. She went straight to th' neighborhood o' th' lily pads,

travellin' low like she wanted to keep hid, an' she lit in th' aidge o' th' lake without a soun'. There she staid still for a 'arf-hour. I slipped inter th' birch-bark, an' th' win' bein' in my favor, let myse'f drift torrerd her. I got as clost as thirty yard to her, an' then I see her work her way easy through the pads torrerd th' bank. Cranin' my neck, I seen w'at th' scheme were.

"On a dry log, not more'n a yard from th' lake, lay th' bigges' hard-shell I ever set my eyes on. Th' sun an' th' slow spring breeze had been too much for this feller, an' he were soun' 'sleep. Th' wood-hen waddled up behin' him lighter'n a feather. I never knowed how she come to s'pect him—reezuned it out in th' dark, I s'pose—but she reached up easy an' got him by th' shell an' tilted him off th' log. He fell a foot, an' w'en he waked up he were flat

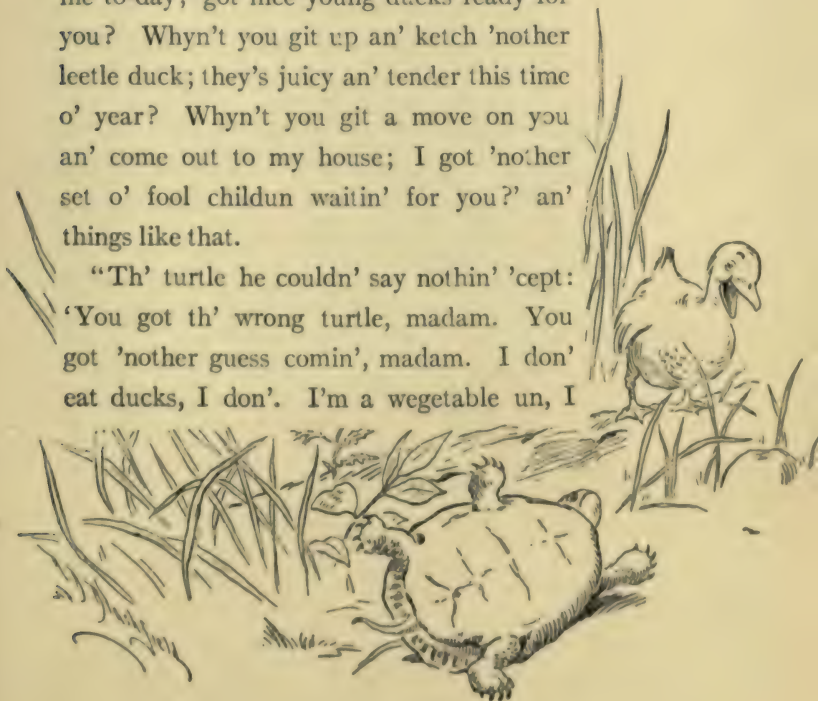
on his back with his laigs sprawled out, jus' as he'pless as a ninety-poun' Frenchmun at a Norwejun alkinholfest.

"Talk 'bout th' fits you th'ow w'en a minner gits tangled up with your line, an' makes out like he's goin' to cut your th'oat, you orter seen that wood-hen. Happy! They ain' no words in th' Canuck langwidge to tell how happy she were. Th' turtle weren't. He squirmed his laigs an' stuck out his haid an' drawed it back an' licked out his tongue an' his wicked red eyes was shootin' fire, but he couldn' do a thing. Th' duck knowed that well's he did. After a w'ile she went 'way an' I could see a larf in her eye w'en she passed me. They ain' no an'mul in th' worl' nur no human, w'at is th' ekal f'r downright meanness o' a female w'at's been robbed o' her young. I got scars on me f'om painters, wildcats,

wolfs, b'ars, foxes, an' deer, but every scar I got come from a female. That duck had fixed it up to let the turtle starve to death, 'cause he'd got fat on her brood, an' she done it. Every day for two weeks she'd light by him an' take a good long look at him. Then she'd rap him hard on the bottom shell an' arsk him fool questions.

"'Whyn't you come an' take dinner with me to-day; got nice young ducks ready for you? Whyn't you git up an' ketch 'nother leetle duck; they's juicy an' tender this time o' year? Whyn't you git a move on you an' come out to my house; I got 'nother set o' fool childun waitin' for you?' an' things like that.

"Th' turtle he couldn' say nothin' 'cept: 'You got th' wrong turtle, madam. You got 'nother guess comin', madam. I don' eat ducks, I don'. I'm a vegetable un, I



am. A musky with a hook scar over his lef' eye got your childun, madam. I see him do it an' I 'tended to tell you 'bout it, but he swore he'd cut my heart out an' got me to tremblin', madam.'

"Then the wood-hen'd laugh so's I thort she wouldn' never git her jaws together agin.

"I hated that murderin' turtle worse'n I ever hated anything afore ur sence, but I got sorry for him an' put him out'n his miz'ry. I took some dry balsam splinters an' built a fire on his belly. W'en it got good an' hot an' his laigs was goin' like the paddles o' a sixteen-man Injun canoe, with the tradin' store on'y a 'arf-mile 'way an' jugs settin' on th' front p'o'ch, he stuck out his haid an' I cut it off. His teeth caught the knife-handle in some way an' bit hard an' dented it. Th' wood-duck were settin' in a tree clost by an' seen th' whole shootin'-

match. W'en it were over she give one lonesome squawk, cuccled 'bout me near 'nough to let me feel th' air from her wings, an' then started straight 'way north. I never see her ag'in, an' I eat that turtle. He hadn' los' so much flesh as I thort for. Turtles are all right, stewed.

"I'm tellin' you this tale," Fergy continued, throwing his pack-straps over his humped shoulders and facing down the trail which led to the hotel five miles away, "so's you'll know by the time I'm back that it don' pay nobody to git too greedy nur too gay, even though they's more bass in the lake."

IN THE SHE-WOLF'S LAIR



THE other man, supine, with a rubber pillow under his head, stared up at the thin blue smoke wreathing against the blackish green of the hemlocks

and said:

"It seems to me, Fergy, that you have rather the best end of it after all. You live hard and work hard, but you are free from worry. There are no telegraphs, telephones, and duns in this country. You pay no rent. I doubt if you pay even a gun license to the State Treasury. You get good air and good sleep and healthful

exercise. You've got to keep sober part of the time, because you can't get anything to drink. Barring accident, you will live to be a very old man and feel skittish up to the time when you go. You are not badly off."

"Yass," said the guide, "I like it. But it all depends on how a man's raised. Ef he's raised to eat clay, he druther have clay as fat ven'son. Yass! They ain' no bill c'lectors here, you bet. This ain' healthy f'r bill c'lectors. They ain' no telegraphs. We gits th' mail f'om Fifiel' w'en God's willin', an' sometimes he ain' willin' f'r two weeks at a jump. Jawy fellers f'om Noo Yawk comes out in th' summer an' worrits us some, but by th' time they gits ready t' go home we got 'em tamed so's they's willin' t' set still an' let a man talk w'at knows how t' talk. Guidin' suits me. I

git \$2 a day an' board, an' I kin stan' a lot o' lip f'r that much money.

"Time th' ice is here I'll be in Fifiel' with mos' a hunderd dollars. That's 'nough t' run me th'ough th' winter an', ef it don', spendin' o' it 'll gimme such a credick I kin wiggle on tell spring. I tried fallin' trees an' I jerked a saw after a man w'at falled trees; I worked on th' drive an' I been tel'fone f'r th' drivers; I carried mail on foot over a trail a hundred an' sixty mile long an' belly-deep in snow; I been bar-keep at th' north eend o' a wide-open dance-hall an' I been cook on a St. Paul steamboat, w'ere I didn' do nothin' f'om daylight tell dark but peel pertaters an' learn good langwidge f'om th' mate. I like guidin' bes'. They ain' nothin' t' guidin' 'cep' sett'n' stil' an' jerkin' a boat an' listenin' t' kicks f'om fellers w'at don' know how t' feesh. I like guidin'

bes' o' anythink in th' worl', 'cep' trappin', an' I'll tell you 'bout trappin'.

"Guidin' you gotter be worried a leetle bit; trappin', so long's th' grub hol's out, you ain' got a keer. Ef it was winter all th' time I wouldn' do nothin' but trap. They's jus' you an' th' w'ite woods an' th' an'muls you ketch—ur don' ketch; it works both ways. You're your own boss. You don' have no apple-headed ijiit, with a gol' eye-glass an' sideburn w'iskers tellin' you:

"'Pull this away, Fergy!' 'Pull that away, Fergy!' 'I think we'd git a strike over yonderway, Fergy!' 'Git a leetle nearer t' th' lily-pads, Fergy!' 'Don' git so clost t' th' lily-pads, Fergy!'

"W'at t' 'ell they mean by callin' me Fergy, says I t' m'se'f, says I, gits me, anyhow. I'm Mr. Henry Ferguson, o' Keebeck, Canady. Ef they weren' a game law

agin it, I'd kill thirty ur forty o' them fellers ev'ry summer. Trappin', you go w'ere you please, an' you eat w'en you please, an' you sleep w'en you please, an' you do as you durn please. Guidin's good 'nough f'r me, guidin' an' trappin', trappin' an' guidin'.

"Where's the money in it?" asked the other man.

"Peltries—skunk, mink, otter, fox, wil'-cat, 'coons, an' wolf. They's more money in wolf w'en you git 'em, but you don' git 'em ev'ry time you think you git 'em. Wolves is got more sence as ninety-nine an' a 'arf men out'n a hunderd an' two. I been in th' woods f'r twenty year an' I never see a full-growed wolf ketched but onct, an' he were blin'. I heerd men talk 'bout ketchin' 'em an' I knowed I were in front o' a shore liar—an' I hates a liar. We gits our money f'om wolf-pups; th' county

clerk pays \$6 apiece f'r skelps. You fin' th' nes' w'en th' ol' wolf ain' there an' you git th' skelps; you fin' it w'en she is there an' you gotter git 'way fas'. I druther fight a bull-moose scraped 'long th' ribs with a Injun arrer as a she-wolf w'at comes up w'en you got th' pups in th' bag. You kin dodge a moose, but you cain' no more dodge a she-wolf as you kin dodge a streak o' litenin' w'at's started out early in th' mornin' t' git you afore night.

"I remember onct I were over in the Letourneau Lake country after deer. Th' snow were a foot deep an' sof' an' it weren' so col'—mebbe 'bout ten 'bove zero. I were lopin' 'long on a buck trail w'en there swunged in f'om th' right 'nother sort o' trail w'at I knowed well. It were wolf, an' big wolf at that. I could tell th' size were more'n or'nary by th' length between

th' footmarks. This wolf, I says t' m'se'f, mus' 'a' been three foot high at th' shoulder. Th' deer had scratched his off fore foot agin som'p'n' an' his tracks showed leetle rings o' red at th' aidges. It were a hot trail f'r a man t' foller, let alone a an'mul w'at's got a nose t' make a p'inter dog 'shamed o' th' day he were borned.

"I follered on at m' bes' licks, doin' mebbe ten mile a hour, mebbe twelve, but I didn have much hope o' gittin' any deer. They was a hunter ahead o' me faster 'n w'at I were, an' I ain' slow. Eight mile we run, first deer, then wolf, then me—eight miles straight nor'eas' an' then 'nother wolf track swung in. This feller stepped longer an' made a deeper hole in th' snow as th' first one. I knowed in a minit o' co'se w'at had a-happed: Th' she-wolf struck th' trail first an' th' dog later on, an' now they was

both hikin' like a w'irlwin' t' git th' meat w'at I jumped. Shore it made me so hot un'er my fur cap that the sweat rolled down inter my eyes an' put 'em out.

"Onct as I slid my snow-shoes, five slides t' th' secon', I heerd a long howl come back out'n th' black trees in front. Fifteen minits later, I heerd three howls an' then a dozen barks f'r all th' worl' like a big dog w'ats got some pheasants treed. That meant it were all up with Mr. Deer, an' I slowed down. I had a gun, yass, with jus' one catteridge in it, an' I hadn' los' no wolves t' speak on. I did jus' as good creepin' as I knowed how, th' win' were with me, an' bimeby I raised slow out'n a holler an' looked over its aidge. A hundred yards 'way, showin' plain on th' snow, th' deer were down, stone daid, an' th' wolves was tearin' at him.



“ ’Tain’ of’n a man sees a growed timber-wolf, an’ I took a good look at ’em. They was prodijus. Th’ dog mus’ ’a’ been five foot long f’om nose t’ tail root an’ th’ tail itself would ’a’ measured two foot. More’n a yard high he stood at th’ shoulder, an’ he weighed not a ounce un’er a hunderd an’ ninety poun’. His pints was black as jet, he were a light gray ’long his back, an’ his belly were deep brown. He were w’at I’d call a brindle. His wife were a leetle smaller an’ her nose were som’p’n’ sharper, but she were a monster, too.

“Now, you git it inter your haid they weren’t nothin’ foxy-lookin’ ’bout them brutes. They were big an’ heavy-set an’ they muzzles was blunt—so blunt they looked like they been sorter stove in drivin’ ’em agin deer flanks an’ colts’ th’oats an’ sech things. You set your eye square on a

timber-wolf w'en he don' know you're lookin' an' you'll see th' game savage mastiff in him—mastiff an' bull with mebbe a dash o' Scotch deerhoun'—but you won' see no fox.

“I had a good min' t' go m' on'y catte-ridge on th' dog an' take to a tree, but I remembered as how th' ol' gal 'd shore stay with me f'r four weeks an' I took my finger off'n th' trigger. I dunno how they foun' out I were there—th' win' were f'om them t' me an' I didn' make a soun'; sometimes I thinks a wolf's got seven senses—but of a sudd'n they w'eeled 'arf-'way f'om me, with they noses bloody, an' w'izzed out o' sight. They went so fas' they was jus' two long gray streaks over th' snow. It'd took two men t' watch 'em—one t' say, 'Here they come!' an' th' other t' say, 'Yonder they go!' I went t' th' deer an'

'spected it. They been at it not more'n ten minits all tol', but it'd s'prised you t' see w'at they'd done to it. I swear they wasn't two poun' o' it fit t' eat. Ef they'd stay'd five minits longer they wouldn' been nothin' but bones.

"I were shore mad. I took long 'nough t' kick th' loose hide an' then I lit out after them wolves. I were boun' t' fin' out w'ere they went. I didn' have no idee o' tacklin' 'em, min' you, but I did want t' fin' out w'ere they lived. I knowed in reezun they had a home somew'eres. Wolves gits marrit jus' like humans, an' they stays together year after year an' loves one 'nother an' builds a home jus' like some humans don'. Findin' th' nes' an' gittin' pups in th' spring were put down in my book, an' I made them snowshoes shuffle so's you a-thort they were a theayter nigger roun'

doin' a buck-an'-wing flop on a sandy stage. I paid a 'arf dolluh onct t' Ashlan' an' see that dance. Ha! ha!

"Th' trail were easy—them wolves didn' have no keer to hide it, cuss 'em!—an' I went by th' trees so fas' they was a solid wall. Fifteen mile an' a few rod I shuffled an' I were jus' gettin' ready t' be limbered up f'r a shore 'nough hike w'en I see a clearin' ahead an' knowed I were clost t' Letourneau Lake. Ten secon's later th' ice showed solid f'om bank t' bank. Here th' trail swung crooked t' th' right an' kep' long th' lake f'r a 'arf-mile. Then it stopped—stopped daid, damme!—stopped 's if they hadn' never been no wolves in th' worl'.

"At th' base o' a hill that rose up fifty yard f'om th' ice were a big holler log. It were a log five foot through an' on'y th' rind o' it were lef'. Ag'inst th' aidges o'

it, an' stickin' t' th' roughness on its inside, were gray hairs, wolf hairs, in plenty, but it were like a barril open f'om eend t' eend, an' they weren't nothin' livin' inside o' it. I'm free t' say it took me 'mos' a hour t' fin' this out. Nachully, w'en I see th' trail stop there I says t' myse'f, says I: 'Them robbers is in there an', Fergy, this is your time t' be good 'n wise,' I says. I waited a long time, but I didn' heer no stir an' gradually I worked my way up to it an' looked through. They were a heap o' leaves near to th' middle, w'ere th' dog an' his wife been layin' up, but at th' fur eend not a sign on th' snow, nur anyw'eres. Arterward I rick'lected they was a falled tree w'at lay with its top-eend clost by th' fur eend o' th' log an' near its butt wer' 'nuther tree an' ayant that a tangle o' logs reachin' down t' th' ice, an' I'd a-knowed if

I'd had sense that th' wolves made they way t' th' ice thataway without leavin' no trail, but jus' then I were thinkin' 'bout pups in th' spring an' I didn' have no sense. I stoops down an' fastens m' shoe-thongs keerful an' I hums back t' camp.

"Late in Aperl I'm back at th' log, with a shotgun, fifteen buckshot in each barril, an' a sack tied at th' mouth with buckskin. I don' 'spec t' ketch either old 'un at home, but I ain' takin' no chances. Th' log's there all right an' th' leaves is there, an' they ain' been slep' in t' a moril certainty sence th' day m' deer was stoled. Further'n that, th' leaves been heaped up an' hollered in th' middle an' they's eight ur nine mallard aigs in 'em. W'iles I were on m' hunkers peekin' through, th' ol' drake an' hen come waddlin' up f'om the lake, squawkin' low an' tellin' one 'nuther how

good th' duck grass was. I didn' have nothin' but buckshot ur I'd a-shot 'em an' et 'em. Anyhow, pups was w'at I wanted, an' I wouldn' a had no time f'r elerfunts ef they'd comed 'long. I got a lot o' min', an' w'en I make it up th' thing it's made up 'bout 's got t' be ketched.

"They'd moved inter th' country th' pas' fall a chap name Muggerson, f'om down 'bout Portage way. He didn' know a wall-eye pike f'om a sun-perch. His biznis were farmin', sciunteefic farmin'. He'd had a lot o' manoor hauled up by th' railroad at a dolluh a ounce an' dumped it on a lot o' clearin's 'roun' Letourneau Lake an' ploughed it in, so's he could raise hay; wil' hay weren't good 'nough f'r him. They's one thing, an' jus' one, a growed wolf never learns an' that's t' keep 'way f'om a ploughed fiel', 'speshully ef it's a she foragin'

f'r pups. I took m' gun an' bag an' started f'r Muggerson's fiel's. Th' f'rst one I struck showed wolf trail runnin' straight torrerd th' south eend o' Long Lake. I went a 'arf-mile t' th' right t' 'nother fiel' an' a day-older trail were there, runnin' torrerd th' south eend o' Long Lake. I foun' six o' them fiel's afore dark an' they all showed ol' trails p'intin' in th' same d'reckshun. Four mile funder on, atween them fiel's an' th' lake, were 'nuther bit o' ploughed lan' w'at Muggerson sowed t' alfalfy an' it showed th' trail.

"I camped there, 'thout no fire, an' nex' mornin' started on a bee-line, knowin' that I had th' nes' located t' a tee-wy-ty. I weren't in no hurry, 'cause I wanted th' sun t' git way up. I calkerlated t' fin' th' ol' lady 'way f'om home, it bein' agin m' natur' t' hunt trouble. Fall and winter

wolves hunts o' nights, but w'en a wife's got a hongery litter she starts out an' rustles any time. She gits her sleep atween jus' afore day an' sun-up an' then she's gone again. It didn' make me feel no better w'en I crossed a bit o' sandy road a mile f'om Long Lake an' see two wolf trails. It meant, o' co'se, that popper were still true an' were helpin' with th' grub-gettin', but I counted on dodgin' 'em.

"Leetle furth'r on I went down inter a rocky holler, mebbe twenty foot deep an' not more'n two yards wide. I follered it 'cause I knowed in reezun th' den were there. Wolves 'll make a burrer ef they cain' git a cave, but they'll take th' cave ev'ry time ef they kin run crost it, an' it were th' cave I were lookin' f'r. I foun' it all right by some claw scratches on red rocks near it. It were jus' a roun' hole in th'

side o' th' holler, ten foot 'bove th' bottom an' 'bout big 'nough f'r a man t' git through. I had a balsam to'ch with me. I lighted it an' stuck it in, an' shined th' inside. Th' cubs was at th' fur eend, 'arf 'sleep an' 'bout three weeks ol', but they weren't no growed-ups, an' I went in. They was five o' 'em—nice fat leetle fellers—an' I says t' m'se'f, w'en I'd got 'em in th' sack an' th' mouth tied, I says t' m'se'f, says I: 'Here's \$30 f'r shore,' says I, an' I crawled out immejit.

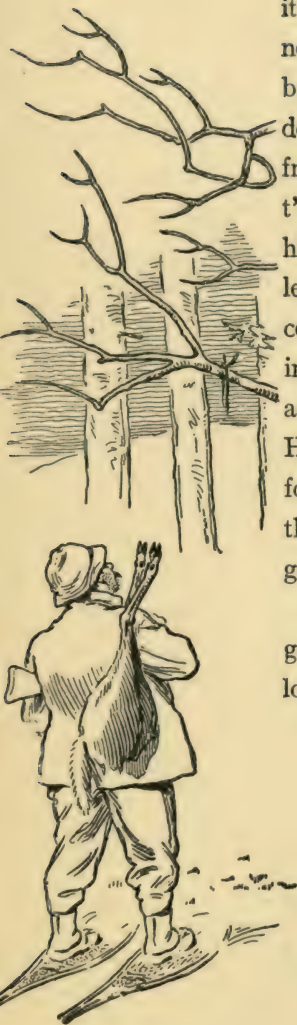
"It cert'ny makes a hard-workin' man feel good t' be humpin' 'long with \$30 hangin' t' his shoulder, an' I laughed some as I went through th' woods at a dog-trot. It were on'y twenty-seven mile t' th' county clerk's office in Phillips, an' I calkerlated t' make it by dinner time, w'ich, in a w'ite person's country, is 12 o'clock.



"Now, min' you, I'd 'a' been all right ef it hadn' been f'r that gun. It didn' weigh nothin'—I'd liever carry six guns 's not—but it made trouble. Three mile f'om th' den I crost a deer trail. It were smellin' fresh—I could 'mos' scent it m'self. I says t' m'self, th' deer couldn' be more'n two hunderd yard 'way. Shore, they were a leetle dampness in th' tracks w're he'd come th'ough a slough. Deer ain' no good in th' spring. I don' kill does at no time, an' a buck's meat then is stringy an' rank. Howsomever, they ain' no fool like a woods fool, onct he's got t' bein' a fool, an' I hangs th' sack t' a saplin' nine foot 'bove th' groun', an' starts out f'r deer.

"Mebbe it were fifteen minits afore I got him an' took off his hin' quarters an' loped back t' th' saplin'. Lissen:

"Th' sack weren't there. A piece o' th'



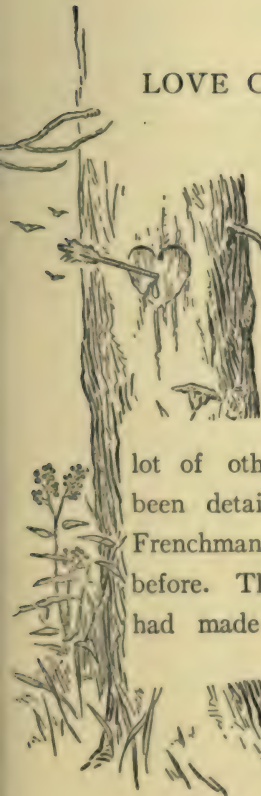
buckskin string hung t' th' saplin' limb, an' it were cut clean like a knife had did it. Nobody could 'a' made me b'lieve as a wolf could jump straight up three yard an' cut a skin-lash, but it were did. W'at's more, I knowed w'ich one done it. Th' popper done it. They were three marks on th' groun' showin' his take-off f'r th' jump. He'd missed twicet an' th' third time were th' chawm. Th' las' take-off were ten foot four an' a 'arf inch f'om th' tronk o' th' saplin'. Then he'd grabbed th' sack in his mouth an' slung it over his shoulder an' gone on 'bout his biznis. They was both there, all right, but I could tell he carried th' sack f'om his deep footmarks. It made me sick. Thirty dolluhs! Think o' that, Mr. Good Feeshermun!

"'Tweren't no use t' go back t' th' holler. I were a bigger fool 'n mushrat in love with

a wood-duck, but I knowed that much. I hikes inter Fifiel' an' I says t' Hennessy at th' drug-store: 'Prescripshums keerfully compoun'ed?' I says, an' he says: 'Yep!' says he, an' I says, says I: 'Compoun'!'

"Late in th' fall I fin' that sack—stumble on it back w'ere th' mallard nes' were in th' log at Letourneau Lake. That were their fav'rite git-away place. I ketched many wolves sence then, but not o' that fam'ly. Sometimes I dreams 'bout them five pups an' th' sack an' th' saplin'. Dreamt 'bout 'em las' night. That's th' reezun I got up an' walked roun' 'bout 12 o'clock."

"It is the reason," said the other man, "why you snored steadily from half-past 8 until half-past 6. No wonder you sleep with your mouth open. Your jaw droops from fatigue."



LOVE CRISIS OF THE GIANT WOODPECKER

IN the cold ashes of the morning's fire Fergy was tracing an intricate pattern with a stick. This pattern contained squares, triangles, circles, oblongs, and a lot of other geometric figures. He had been detailing the visions of a crazy Frenchman he had known two winters before. The Frenchman averred that he had made frequent visits to hell and brought back circumstantial accounts of the way in which it was laid out. Fergy's pat-

tern was a ground plan of the infernal regions.

"Right here," he said, pointing to a small triangle, "were Furnace No. 9. Pierre he useter say it were intended f'r me—said my name were writ up over th' door. Ev'y time he went to hell he come back lookin' more peakeder an' yallery, but he never changed none in his plan an' allers he hunted me up an' said the furniss were waitin' f'r me. I got t' feelin' like I owned it. He drawed th' plan o' th' place on a piece o' birch-bark f'r me.

" 'Yo' keepin' dis,' he says. 'W'en yo' die an' go dere mebbe so yo' gittin' los',' he says. 'Jus' foller de plan,' he says, 'an' yo' lan' at nombre nine fo' sho',' says he.

"It's sorter comf'ble f'r a man to know w'ere he's goin'. I ain' never lacked a home on this here yearth an' I'm glad to fin'

out that I'm to hev one w'en I'm daid. It gives a man som'p'n' to look forrerd to. Mebbe they's room f'r more'n one in th' hole reserved f'r me," he added looking tentatively at the other man, "an' if so be's you ain' got no place to stay w'en you git there all you gotter do is to rap on th' steel door an' I'll let you in. You've allers paid me f'r my guidin' an' I wanter do th' fair thing."

"Thanks," said the other man briefly. "Perhaps I'll call. Where's your Frenchman now?"

"W'y," Fergy responded, "I guess he's gone there f'r good. Anyways he went out on th' Flambeau las' winter arter th' fus' freeze an' laid down on th' ice. Said he'd just got back an' were so hot he hadder cool off. Th' ice were rotten w'ere he made his bed an' he went through an' un'er. They

foun' w'at were lef' o' him in th' spring, three mile an' four rod b'low w'ere he went down. Seems t' me that arter passin' out like that a man'd need consid'ble warmin'."

Through the heavy trees on the right of the camp a hoarse heavy cackle sounded, rising and falling and far prolonged. It nad an eldritch quality and was followed by a number of rapid blows, made apparently by striking two light boards together. The other man looked up inquiringly and Fergy answered:

"Gi'nt woodpecker. Ain't many o' 'em lef'. Woods useter be full o' 'em, but they got skeered ur som'p'n' an' went away. Harmless birds they be, an' or'narily they got sense t' throw at pos'-holes. Sens'tive, too. Knowed one onct w'at druv his bill so fur inter a hemlock he couldn' pull it out an' jus' hung there an' died o' mort'ficashun.

"They's crazy folks like Pierre I been tellin' you 'bout an' they's crazy an'muls, but th' crazies' thing I ever see, human ur an'mul, were one o' them birds like that un you heerd hammerin' jus' now. He weren't vi'lent crazy; didn' try t' kill nothin' nur butt down no trees nur nothin' like that, but he jus' went daffy an' stayed daffy untell his sufferin's was relieved by death.

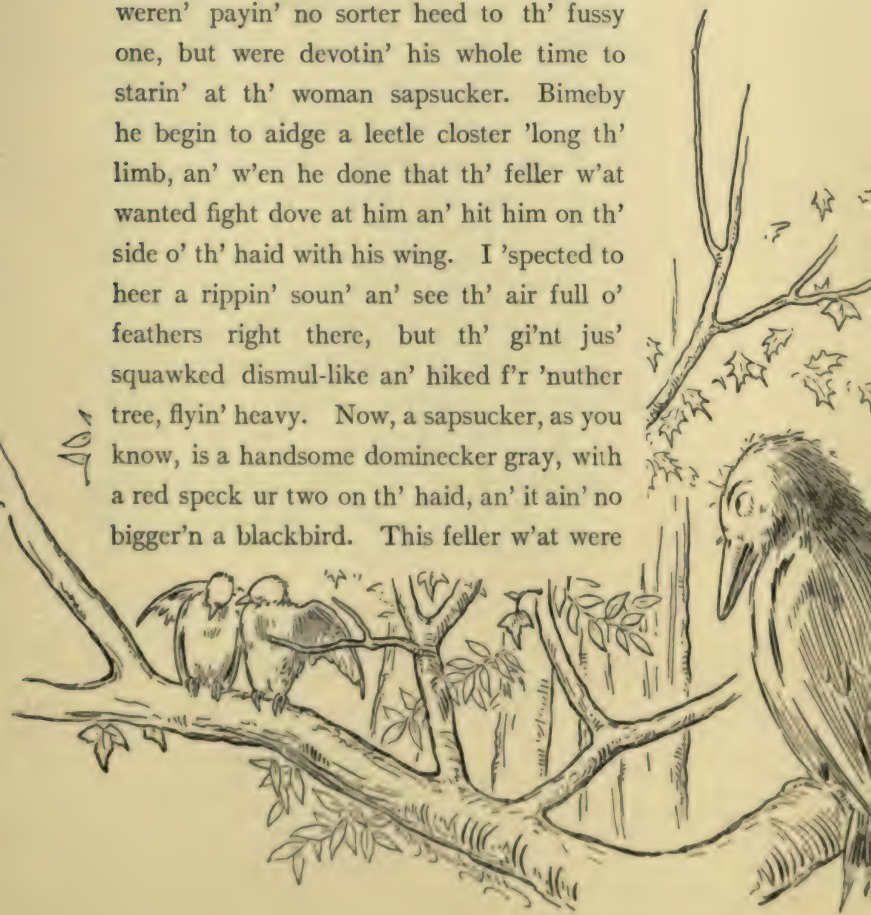
"Th' gi'nt woodpecker, you know, is mos' as big as a crow. He's jus' like the smaller kin' in color, black an' white. With his back turned, he looks like he's got on a long-tailed coat with a b'iled shirt. His haid is red as blood an' he's got a topknot w'at sticks up like a balsam to'chlight. His bill is a inch an' a quarter long, an' they don' make no iron w'at's harder. It's a bird w'at or'narily 'tends to its own biznis, but sometimes it gits mad at som'p'n' ur other an'

then they's trouble f'r w'atever kin' o' nother bird happens t' be erlong. I knowed a gi'nt woodpecker onct to kill four gro'beeks an' a jay jus' 'cause some sort o' caterpillar he'd caught bit him on th' tongue. That don' happen of'en, howsomever. Mos' time they goes quiet an' keeps theyse'fs to theyse'fs.

"I were walkin' through th' woods one spring mornin' lookin' f'r spruce gum, w'en I run acrost a pair o' sapsuckers w'at had jus' gone to housekeepin'. They'd built a nes' in a daid mapul 'bout 8 foot f'om th' groun', ur mebbe 8 foot three inches. Both on 'em was sittin' outside billin' an' cooin' w'en I come 'long. I wouldn' paid no 'tention to 'em ef it hadn' a been f'r th' actions o' th' he bird. He stopped kissin' his wife f'r a minit an' begin to hop up an' down, spreadin' out his wings and stickin' out his

haid an' makin' a hissin' n'ise like he boun' to insult somebody. He were shore mad.

"I lookt 'round, an' settin' on a limb twenty foot away were a he gi'nt woodpecker, his haid on one side, his feathers all draggly, an' a sick look in his eye. He weren' payin' no sorter heed to th' fussy one, but were devotin' his whole time to starin' at th' woman sapsucker. Bimeby he begin to aidge a leetle closter 'long th' limb, an' w'en he done that th' feller w'at wanted fight dove at him an' hit him on th' side o' th' haid with his wing. I 'spected to heer a rippin' soun' an' see th' air full o' feathers right there, but th' gi'nt jus' squawked dismul-like an' hiked f'r 'nuther tree, flyin' heavy. Now, a sapsucker, as you know, is a handsome dominecker gray, with a red speck ur two on th' haid, an' it ain' no bigger'n a blackbird. This feller w'at were



doin' th' sneak ac' could a w'ipped four dozen saps with his laigs hobbled, but he jus' didn' hev no soul in him. I were so cur'ous 'bout it that I laid behin' a log an' watched. Long's I stayed there nothin' but th' same thing happened. Th' gi'nt'd inch his way back to a place w'ere he could git a good look at th' female an' th' leetle one'd biff him an' he'd squawk an' pull his freight. I got degusted an' lef'.

"A week arterward, passin' that way, I seen th' sapsuckers come out'n they hole, th' day bein' bright an' sunshiny, an' begin to play 'roun' in th' leaves. They hadn' been at it more'n five minits w'en heer come this sick gi'nt agin an' th' same performance were went through. I think I notis' this time, howsomever, that th' big feller don' giv' groun' so easy. He didn' try to hit back, but it took two ur three pretty smart

raps to git him goin' an' then he don' go so fas' as he mout. He jus' flewed 'way sorter keerless, like he didn' give a whoop w'uther he went ur not, an' he lit on a limb not more'n ten foot further off.

"I says to m'se'f, says I: 'This feller's got crazy 'nough t' love th' leetle lady sucker, an' out'n regard f'r her feelin's he's lettin' that leetle squirt slap him roun'. He don' wanter make no trouble,' says I, 'cause he's willin' t' be hit jus' so's he kin stay 'roun' an' look at her. But his patience is wearin' out,' says I, 'an' I'm mistook ef they won' be some trouble heer 'fore long. He ain' doin' no harm jus' settin' an' lookin',' I says. 'Them sapsuckers don' own all th' woods,' I says. 'A cat may look at a king,' I says. 'Th' big feller ain' never said a word to th' leetle lady, an' damme, ef he ain' in th' right o' it,' says I.

"I begin to sympathize strong with th' big feller; I do hate to see anybody, big ur leetle, thumped 'roun' f'r nothin'. W'ile I were squattin' behin' a stump an' talkin' to m'se'f, th' he sapsucker 'd hit th' gi'nt a couple more biffs. He'd w'ack him side th' haid an' then fly back to his wife an' dance roun' her with his bill cocked sidewise, much as to say: 'Ain' I a wonder?' An' then he'd look roun', an' if th' gi'nt'd come back much as a foot ur two, he'd dart at him agin an' give it to him hard. He got to goin' furder an' furder 'way to do this, an' I laughs to m'se'f an' I thinks: 'In 'bout five minits you're goin' to be th' mos' 'stonished sapsucker w'at ever drilled a hole in a pine log.'

"I knowed nacherly it were comin'. I seen th' same thing at more dances an' in more loggin'-camps'n I kin count. One

feller begins to pick on 'nuther feller, an' th' 'nuther feller don' say nothin' to th' fus' feller, an' th' fus' feller keeps on pickin' on th' 'nuther feller, an' keeps on pickin' on th' 'nuther feller, an' keeps on pickin' on th' 'nuther feller, tell th' 'nuther feller ups an' trims 'bout eight poun' off'n th' fus' feller an' ev'ything's quiet roun' there f'r a week.

"Finerly th' gi'nt were sittin' on a twig, fifty yard 'way, lookin' an' longin', never sayin' a word, an' all humped up like he had a col'. Mr. Sapsucker he done a big war-dance, an' he sorter screamed an' hefted hisse'f off th' groun' a yard high, an' then he made a bee-line f'r th' big one, hard's he could drive. I seen th' gi'nt sorter perk up w'en th' sapsucker started an' flirt out his wings a leetle an' turn his eyes innerd torerd his bill. He hopped up off'n th'

twig all o' a sudden an' let th' gray one flash un'er him. Then he turned in th' air an' did a leetle dartin' hisse'f. He caught th' sucker three rod funder on an' didn' kill him right away. He took him by th' neck with his iron bill, an' flewed inter th' woods fifty yard off, so's th' leetle lady coul'n' see w'at were goin' on. He lit on a stump with his wictim an' set on him a leetle w'ile. Then he raised up that bill. He drewed his haid back, slow an' slower an' funder back, untell it were mos' touchin' his shoulders. Then he swiped forrerd with it jus' once. They wasn't a squawk nur nothin', on'y th' dull soun' o' that bill goin' through th' sucker's haid an' ringin' on th' hard stump. Th' gi'nt sorter worked his bill backerds an' forrerd tell he got it loose, then he hit th' body a kick an' it rolled off on th' groun'. Then he went back to his

twig an' set there aw'ile, lookin' at th' leetle wife, who were gittin' oneasy. No brave, galliant husban' come back to her, an' arter settin' there an' walkin' roun' an' lookin' up inter th' trees f'r a hour, she crep' back inter her hole, sorrerful. I see th' gi'nt's eye an' he didn' look sad any. He staid roun' aw'ile an' then he give a whoop an' went 'way.

"He were back good an' early nex' mornin', but no leetle gray bird come out t' greet him, an' he were th' lonelies'-lookin' loveyer you ever see. Nex' day th' same thing happened, an' he knowed then that th' widder had went to settin' an' needed food. You never heerd tell on no bird w'at worked like he done. Th' fus' job afore him were to widen th' hole so's he could git his haid in. He hung onto th' mapul with his claws, an' th' way th' chips flewed reminded me

o' a eight-foot saw gittin' down to biznis in one o' th' big lumber-mills. He drilled an' drilled, an' in harf an hour all o' his body were inside o' th' tree. Then th' widdy sittin' on the aigs give a frightened cry—I s'pose she thort she were a goner—an' th' g'int come out an' hiked.

“He were back in no time with a worm in his bill. He dropped this down in th' hole an' hiked. Almos' afore he were out o' sight back he come with 'nuther worm. His heart were in it; he were workin' f'r th' on'y thing he loved, an' he come pretty near makin' a black an' w'ite line in th' air, goin' an' comin'—a black an' w'ite line with a dash o' red in it from that blazin' topknot o' hisn. I seen that ef he weren't stopped he'd have th' hen buried a foot deep in worms, so I stepped out an' heaved a chunk at him, an' he quit.

"Now, th' mistake he made in feedin' her were th' mistake he made all th' time he were 'quainted with her. She were twenty-four sizes too small f'r him, an' even his tenderes' actions looked to her like he were tryin' to tear up a saplin'. He couldn' be brought t' ree'lize this nohow, but he could a-seed it plain 'nough ef he hadn' been, as I say, plum crazy. She knowed he meant well, an' she got sorter used to him in time—jus' as well used as she could, seein' that she were in terror o' her life.

"He'd been feedin' gi'nt hens in pas' seasons an' gi'nt hens 'll git outside o' two poun' o' grubs an' grasshoppers a day. It took a good deal o' her time throwin' away food she couldn' eat. That made th' aigs late in hatchin'. She tol' him onct she needed some more moss an' shavin's f'r th' nes', an' he split up 'nough timber an' lugged

'nough moss to make a bed f'r 'leven families o' sapsuckers. Ef she wanted water, he got a holler leaf an' filled it an' buzzed up to th' hole, happy as a clam, an' purty near drowned her.

"Th' hole were digged un'er a big limb w'at juttet out. Sapsuckers allers do this so's to keep th' rain out'n the nes'. She thort onct th' limb were too big an' needed trimmin', so's more sunshine could stream down on her. She tol' him 'bout it an' he laughed in glee, tickled 'mos' inter spasms by th' chanst to do som'p'n' f'r her. He set to work an' in a hour called to her to come out an' look. She got as fur as the aidge o' th' hole and squinted up at th' limb, an' jus' then it broke an' liked to took off a piece o' her bill. He dug 'way at odd times tell he made th' channel to th' nes't big 'nough f'r him, an' one time, w'en she

come inter th' sun to stretch herse'f, he went down an' squatted on th' aigs to keep 'em warm. He broke one of 'em, o' co'se, an' come up with a piece o' th' shell stickin' to his claws. She turnt in then an' give him a talkin' w'at made him think he were in a Mothers' Congress an' all o' 'em was astin' him t' onct how he dared. He went 'way f'r two days an' on'y come back 'cause he were 'frighted she'd starve. She were glad then t' git th' worms, I kin tell you.

“Two weeks later on th' young was hatched, an' a leetle w'ile arter that she brung 'em out f'r to learn 'em how to fly. She took 'em to th' groun' one by one an' set 'em up on stumps an' pushed 'em off. Meanwhile th' gi'nt he sit off at a respec'ful distance an' bubbled with joy. They weren't none o' his kids, th' cussed fool; he didn' have part nur parcel in 'em, but he

loved they mammy so hard anything w'at b'longed to her were sorter sakerd t' him. Th' younglin's didn' make much out at flyin' th' fus' day—they was three o' 'em—but she weren't discouridged. She took two o' 'em back in th' arternoon, an' w'en he picked up one like it were a feather and handed it to her at th' mouth o' th' hole without hurtin' of it none, he were so proud you'd a thort somebody 'd give him a pair o' red-topped boots an' a new axe with a aidge on it like a razor.

“The fam'ly were out ev'y day arter that, an' I lost time f'om my biznis watchin' of 'em. Th' gi'nt fed an' watered th' whole bunch. He worked harder'n a logger in debt at th' comp'ny store. He made a housewife o' hisse'f, an' cleaned out th' nes' f'r her. He brought 'em fresh leaves an' moss t' sleep on. They weren't no grass-

hopper big 'nough f'r 'em; they weren't no grub w'ite an' fat an' juicy 'nough f'r 'em. W'en I fus' see him—outside o' his ailin' with love—he were a likely-lookin' bird. His feathers were glosty, an' a redder haid never flitted through th' north woods, but he wore hisse'f to a frazzle on them sap-suckers. F'om before sunup tell plum dark he were comin' an' goin', totin' food, ur wattah, ur beddin', ur teachin' them young uns t' fen' f'r theyse'fs, ur snatchin' a minit ur two to court th' widdy, an' th' funnies' part o' it were he thort he were havin' a good time. I couldn' never see as they thankt him none. They took w'at he had to give an' paid no 'tention to him res' o' th' time. As f'r th' leetle lady, she jus' ca'mly cut him out. He weren't in her worl' a tall. She never did set down to no such meals, she never did sleep in no such

bed, she never did have nobody to watch over her an' protec' her an' slave f'r her an' wussip her like w'at he done, but she took it all as a matter o' co'se, an' f'om day's beginning to day's eend she never said a word to him. You'd a thort he'd a tumbled arter aw'ile, but he didn' tumble. He were jus' crazy; that's all.

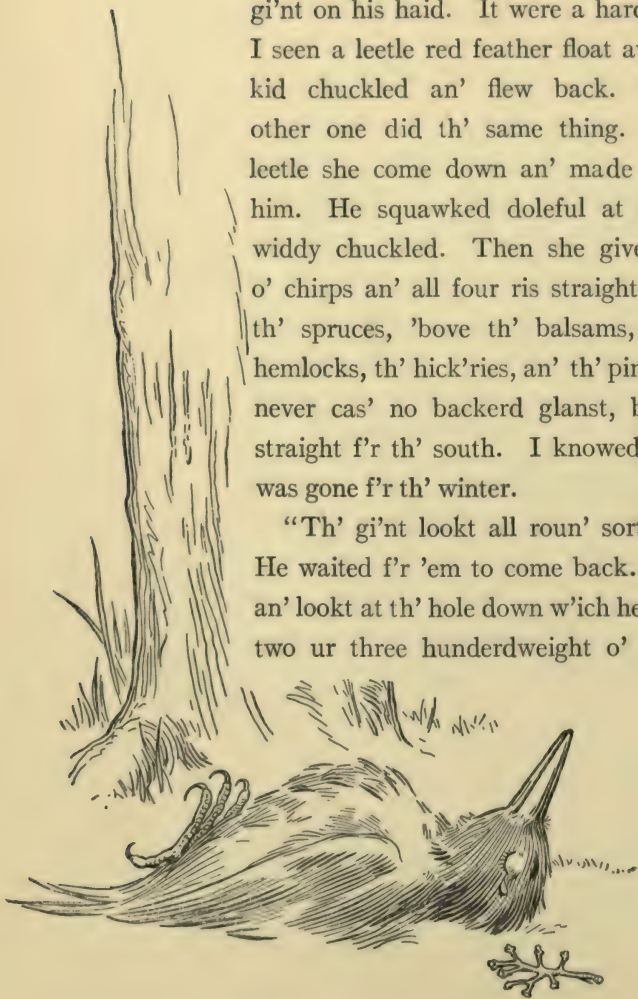
"They come a time w'en th' kids got big an' strong an' wishin' f'r to do f'r theyse'fs. Two was he suckers, an' one day w'en I were watchin' he got back with jus' one worm. It were fearful hot—th' mont' were Augus'—an' he were flyin' low an' slow, mos' worked down. He give th' worm to th' leetle she kid, an' th' two boys jumped on him an' walloped him. He didn' try to defen' hisse'f, nur to run 'way. He stuck his haid un'er his wing an' let 'em knock him aroun' much as they wanted to. W'en

they wore theyse'fs out biffin' him, he went inter a near-by tree an' squawked mournful to hisse'f. The widdy lookt on like it weren't none o' her biznes, but it were easy to see she were reel proud o' her brave sons, an' thort mebbe they didn' give th' gi'nt ha'f 'nough. It made me so mad, ef I'd had a gun I'd a-shot th' hull blamed bunch. Arter that the he kids useter w'ip him three or four times a day. They got so they laid inter him jus' f'r exercise. They jukked mos' o' th' feathers out'n him in a week, an' all he could do f'r consolashun were to work more'n ever with not arf his clothes on.

"At las' th' thing ended. It got to be late in September. One day 'bout noon th' four o' 'em gathered apart f'om him on a daid limb ten yard away. He were settin' on th' groun', sejected. He'd brought th' widdy a

fat green hopper an' she'd simply declined to tetch it. F'om th' seat on th' limb one o' th' he's flewed down an' w'acked th' gi'nt on his haid. It were a hard blow, an' I seen a leetle red feather float away. Th' kid chuckled an' flew back. Then th' other one did th' same thing. Then th' leetle she come down an' made a pass at him. He squawked doleful at this. Th' widdy chuckled. Then she give a couple o' chirps an' all four ris straight up, 'bove th' spruces, 'bove th' balsams, 'bove th' hemlocks, th' hick'ries, an' th' pines. They never cas' no backerd glanst, but haided straight f'r th' south. I knowed then they was gone f'r th' winter.

"Th' gi'nt lookt all roun' sorter dismul. He waited f'r 'em to come back. He went an' lookt at th' hole down w'ich he'd emptied two ur three hunderdweight o' food. He



flew to th' leetle spring w'ere he useter git they wattah f'r 'em. Th' prints o' his feet was thick all roun' it. He come back an' his eye fell on some twigs w'ere the she kid had been practisin' at nes'-buildin', an' he stampt on th' pieces. He went 'way, but were back in a minit ur two with a bunch o' red berries in his bill. I knowed w'at they was—wild poppies w'at grows in swamps—rank p'ison they be. He set on th' aidge o' th' deserted home an' thort hard f'r a harf-hour. Then he swallered 'em one by one. He hadn' got th' las' one landed w'en he teetered a leetle bit, then come down. He hit th' groun' on his back, with his laigs an' bill p'intin' up'erds. W'en I got to him he were stone daid."

"That," said the other man, "was because he went out of his class. Animals,

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it seems, are a good deal like human beings."

"No," said Fergy, "that ain' no way to say it: humans is a good deal like an'muls."

THE END.

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Though in this tale four "humans" are duly human, and excite our sympathy and interest, the great Micmac swamp in Nova Scotia dominates the action. Perhaps the most striking "human" is the fascinating and unscrupulous Mrs. Marescaux, who comes to the hero in his camp in the deep woods. Through her machinations he and the heroine have to face many grim adventures and death is often imminent. How it comes, or if it comes, we will not tell. Indian and half-breed themes add picturesqueness.

UNCLE MAC'S NEBRASKY

By WILLIAM R. LIGHTON. Author of "The Ultimate Moment," etc. With Frontispiece by W.H. DUNTON.

William R. Lighton has scarcely a superior for grasp on the masculine traits of the earlier West. In this book he gives bits of conversational autobiography from the mixed career of "Uncle Mac," a genuine Westerner, who went from Indiana in '55 when strenuousness was more a reality than a fad. "Uncle Mac" is a real live man, full of shrewd humor. His yarns are quite as strange as any truth. Of course there are several lively frontier episodes.

A NIGHT WITH ALESSANDRO

By TREADWELL CLEVELAND, JR. With three views in colour by ELIOT KEEN.

The action of this stirring tale occupies but a single night, from dark to dawn. The scene and period are among the most picturesque in history,—Florence in the twilight of the Medicis. According to the principles laid down by that great historical story-teller, Von Riehl, the principal characters—a French gentleman, sent by Charles V. to report on the sentiment of the Florentines, his body servant, and the heroine—are all fictitious. But there are telling sketches of the actual interesting people they fall in with, including the treacherous banker, Strozzi (in whose prison-like palace much of the action passes), the dissolute Duke Alessandro, his despicable kinsman "Lorenzaccio," Cardinal Ippolito, and others. Effective coloured sketches of the Strozzi palace at night, Florence at dusk, and Fiesole at dawn, embellish the book.

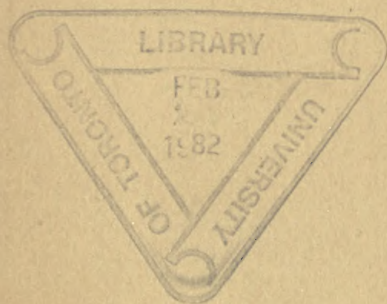
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